



Society : Centre Stage
Production : Lysistrata
Date : 16th November 2017
Venue : The Bridewell Theatre
Report by : Tony Sweeney

Show Report

General

The classic ancient Greek story about women withholding sex to end a war was a fitting idea for a really solid musical theatre experience. Re-imagined in to the 1940s and using songs from the period along with songs by modern artists, but in the style, worked extremely well and Ellie Cahill who developed this piece of original work must be congratulated on her drive and vision to bring this to the stage. I am always impressed with the range and standard of original work by our groups. It's a real testament to their talent that means these shows work so well.

Inevitably the subject matter meant this was a very adult show with some fantastic bawdy humour that really added to the shows impact. Lots of double meanings bought some moments of great comedy which made it a well rounded show. The pre show announcement to switch off mobile phones helped the audience suspend modern distractions and immerse themselves in the experience.

Players-Leading

Tessa Kennedy (Lysistrata) was tall and commanding in the title role. A fantastic and striking period dress added to the strength of her characters presence. She has an excellent voice and dances well. All round this was an excellent portrayal of a very different character.

Caroline Steer (Nicky) as Lysistrata's fairly neurotic friend gave an excellent supporting role full of passion, energy and character working well with the other cast members.

Savannah Gallo (Mona) as the vampish Mona again injected real feeling into the character which could have so easily become a stereotype and she avoided that temptation well. Again an excellent singing and dancing style added depth to the whole show.

Sarah Taylor (Edith) as another member of the plot came dressed as a factory worker from the period. A striking costume added greatly to her character and hers was an excellent musical theatre performance.

Siobhan McConnon (Beatrice) in a role slightly different from her usual ones but this role allowed her to more fully display the width of her talent. An excellent singing voice and a fantastic characterisation made this another strong performance.

Alexis Rose (Virginia) as the commissioner's rather repressive wife gave us a strong and memorable character which as a counterpoint to the protesting women gave the show greater colour and interest.

Ben Woolley (Commissioner) as the rather sheepish Commissioner for Health and Safety (a concept totally alien in the 1940's) gave us an interesting character whose lack of effectiveness was central to the success of the female protagonists.

Matt Munro (Chief of Police) as the Chief of Police didn't seem to be very distinct from the other three policemen. He along with his three man crew, giving a gentle comic feeling which set the tone and lightened the mood.

Alex Saleh (Ken) as Mona's frustrated and horny husband gave us a magical theatrical performance. His performance and interactions with his wife during the seduction scene being well worked out giving the show its core in a delightful way.

Support

A large and well drilled supporting cast sang and danced with great energy and enthusiasm. Great dancing and fantastic singing both individually and as a group made them the backbone of the show. The policemen had a sort of keystone cops quality which added to their comedic portrayals.

Director

Ellie Cahill in both writing and directing put an enormous amount of energy into the whole process and gave us all a night to remember. Having access to a very talented cast and supported by the rest of the production team she marshalled all the elements with precision and insight giving us a show that was wildly appreciated by the audience.

Musical Director

Max Fagandini a small band who being located at the back of the stage were an integral part of the show. Keeping a good and supportive level of sound and playing a big part in the period feel his was a major contribution. His part in selecting the songs was also impressive. A fair number of period classics including the relatively unknown Andrews Sisters version of "In the Mood" was excellent. Using songs from Barbara Streisand, Katy Perry and Madonna and doing so using a 1940's arrangement style was impressive.

Choreographer

Hannah McKenna-Vickerstaff drilled her dancers to perfection. A variety of dance routines with various degrees of technical difficulty allowed everyone to be part of the spectacle. Obviously the better dancers were used more in the more challenging aspects but all in all her routines worked to enhance the overall spectacle. The routine for "in the mood" was amazing with the whole cast delivering a fantastic and energetic number with some really memorable dancers working at the vert top level.

Stage Management

The stage space was used well and all entrances and exits were carefully worked through. Moving from large crowded scenes to smaller more intimate moments were all done seamlessly with the show moving at the right pace to allow the action to flow effectively.

Sound

The sound levels were again well worked out with the band giving a supportive level to the singers. This meant the audience heard both the dialogue and the song lyrics well which is the very definition of good sonic management.

Lighting

The lighting was used well to flood the stage and allowed all soloists to be spotlighted. The range of scenes did not need changes to the time of day so this worked well.

Make-up

The make up was good and the use of period hairstyles for both men and women a well thought out piece of detail that enhanced the shows impact.

Set Design

The set very much had the feel of the time with a bomb damaged door and directions to the air raid shelter. Simple yet effective it certainly played it part in creating the period feel.

Props

The props were used appropriately without ever getting in the way. Most of the action didn't need much in the way of props to work fully.

Costumes

The costumes were very much in period though some of the hemlines perhaps were shorter than would have been the norm at the time in the UK. Well made well used and stylish they added to the feel of the show helping transport us back to a very different time.

Programme

The programme was excellent and a must for the NODA competition. Excellent biographies and an interesting article by the writer/director gave us an insight into the story which is perhaps not widely known but will be now.

Front of house

The front of house team worked well and coped well with the perennial problem of managing the flow of people through the tiny Bridewell lobby. Friendly and welcoming their efforts helped start the evening on a positive note and with a full house to deal with made sure everyone was accommodated even the surprising number of latecomers.

Tony Sweeney
Regional Representative
NODA London District 1