

1997 Orpheus in the Underworld

NODA REPORT

WITHAM A.O.S. - ORPHEUS IN THE UNDERWORLD
Public Hall Witham

I have to confess that Orpheus is something of a favourite for me, both for its music and its outrageous burlesque of classical mythology. To be properly enjoyed it has to be sung well and it has to be FUN, and Witham's production succeeded on both of these counts, making the fun element very obvious, very early.

Chorus work made a good contribution to the comedy and was well disciplined, both in music and the fairly limited movement set. All the soloists had the measure of their songs, though I did feel that 'I was a King' was taken too fast to be the compelling number it should be. The production kept up a good pace, apart from a distinctly dead period (excuse the pun) immediately following The Hades Chorus, and the dancers excelled themselves with The Galop.

A well balanced cast made the family of the Gods into an interesting set of characters, who squabbled with gusto as the opportunity arose. Too many to mention individually, all deserve praise, but Peter McKay's Vulcan was a gem. An object lesson in what can be done with a minor part!

This was a well staged production directed by Edwina McKay, with some nice touches, like the hand puppet snake in the opening, Diana's black leather gear for stag (night) hunting, Mercury on skates through the audience, and the use of the ante room for the Fly Duet, rather than being confined by the Bathroom. Good sets, well dressed, appropriate lighting, but oh dear what a noise was made by the smoke machine. Makes you wish for the days of frozen Carbon Dioxide!

John James directed a 16 piece orchestra, keeping a tight rein on events, and without an array of sound equipment all the soloists and chorus could be adequately heard. It can be done!

As ever the show was not a sell out, yet, as ever, the audience was not sorry it came.

Well done all concerned for a thoroughly enjoyable evening.