

NORTH ESSEX THEATRE GUILD SHOWCASE FESTIVAL 2023/2024

WAOS

Crazy for You

Directed by Aimee Hart,

Adjudicated by Amanda Powell

28/10/2023

FRONT OF HOUSE

The FOH team are always so efficient, welcoming and helpful.

The picture board in the foyer was lovely and, as always, the programme was nice and informative. I especially appreciated the sections informing us all about WAOS, what things cost, how to get involved and the awards you had achieved. The social media publicity was also consistently present and strong.

SETTING/STAGE MANAGEMENT

Congratulations to Joe Geddis, Karla Marie, and Lee Taylor for creative a very impressive set, with revolving scenery, excellently painted backdrops, a pop-up saloon bar, benches, tables and chairs and a few multi-purpose boxes, all of which made the scene changes quick and efficient. It was always easy to determine which room/place a scene was situated. I would have perhaps re-positioned the telephone, as it did look a little strange when Polly used the phone minus the mouthpiece as it was set at the back of the stage.

I would have perhaps used less benches during dance numbers such as 'Stiff Upper Lip' as the stage became too crowded, and the benches hindered the company's movements. Perhaps having the back row standing to reduce the amount would have worked better?

The Back Stage Team were very well managed by Ben Sawyer, the set changes seemed effortless (which I know is extremely hard to achieve with limited wing space) and were always slick and efficient. A good team effort, well done!

LIGHTING AND SOUND

The Lighting was very well done, I could find no fault with anything. A well-lit stage with no visible patchy areas. I loved all the little mood lighting touches throughout, they really helped to create the right atmosphere.

The sound was okay, the main characters mics were beautifully levelled, but it was a shame that all the 'non-principal' mics were far too quiet, especially during ensemble numbers, where most were drowned out by the Orchestra.

MUSIC

Congratulations to Susannah Edom and Phil Toms, the Orchestra was wonderful. This big orchestral arrangement is rather 'full-on', and as a smaller orchestra they all rose to the big task with aplomb. A joy to listen to.

COSTUME / PROPS

I loved all the costume choices but would have perhaps addressed the fit on some of them.

The ladies all looked suitably 'Broadway Chorus Girl', the country/cowboy style outfits were perfect, and I loved the twin outfits of the two Zangler's! Polly's outfits were all lovely and I especially liked the white number at the end, very glamorous.

Props were also great, from the bottles and glasses for the bar to the costume rails at the Gaiety. Everything was well sourced and fit the style of the show very well.

DIRECTION/CHOREOGRAPHY

This is a fast-paced show which requires strong tapping and dancing skills, which must have kept Aimee on her directorial toes!

There were some clever direction choices, e.g., the staging of the two Zangler's moving around the bar (before they see each other) and the last bar fight/death scene was a triumph! Be careful not to stage important moments too far upstage/behind furniture as it can weaken the moment (e.g. the revealing of the real Zangler and the realization that Bobby was a Zangler imposter was all USL behind tables and chairs). But overall, I think the staging was well done.

However, I didn't feel the Choreography quite hit the mark in the same way, although I appreciate it's a hard task for the choreographer when the cast are movers rather than advanced tap dancers.

When you have a large cast it's always nice to want to get them all on stage as much as possible, but when setting scenes/dances bear in mind the size of scenery and amount of props/staging you will eventually have to work with on this smaller stage to avoid cramped or untidy moments. There were some nice tableaux moments, I loved the 'Slap That Bass' section when the dancers became the instruments, it was very effective, but I wished the ensemble had had a bit more to do, with a few more chances to shine at the front of the stage, as they always seemed to be at the back. I would have perhaps looked at shortening the dance breaks for the two principals for their numbers, as these moments needed a 'Fred and Ginger' feel, which wasn't quite achieved. There were some nice uses of dance moves matching inflections in the music (the foot shuffles and foot/head flicks were very effective), but it all needed to be much tighter and neater throughout.

Aimee did well in her debut Director/Choreographer role and with a few adjustments will, no doubt continue to be an asset to the group.

PERFORMANCES

MATTHEW SCOTT (Bobby Child): A very nice actor to watch, an enthusiastic performer with very good comic timing, especially when mimicking Zangler! A strong actor who had a good on-stage rapport with Polly. Matthew has a very nice singing voice; he just lacked a little finesse in the dancing.

SOPHIE HOLMES (Polly Baker): A beautiful voice with a lovely vocal quality. Her rendition of 'Someone to Watch Over Me' was stunning. A very strong actress who gave me excellent 'Calamity Jane' vibes throughout her performance. Just be aware to soften your movements when performing lyrical dance numbers and extend your arms when you come out of a 'turn' to finish off the move and create a nice 'line'. A very watchable performer, well done.

STEWART ADKINS (Bela Zangler): A very funny performance that got funnier as the show progressed. Stewart really came into his own and excelled in the 'two Zanglers' scene and 'What Causes That?' number. It was a pleasure to watch this strong character actor.

MAEVE BORGES (Irene Roth): A nice character performance from Maeve. Her portrayal of a woman who is used to always getting her own way, and her annoyance at not being able to get Bobby to commit was spot on. Maeve handled the choreography well in 'Naughty Baby' showing off a lovely set of pins, but I felt the choreography needed a little finessing for her to do it full justice. Perhaps slower sexier moves as she sang with the occasional bigger/sharper move to match an inflection in the music would have tidied it up a little and made it look sultrier.

TREVOR DRURY (Lank Hawkins): A confident performer who played the slightly villainous character of Lank very well. Good character work throughout, and I liked the way he fell for/got seduced by Irene.

JOE GEDDIS (Everett Baker): A performer who really looked like he was having a fantastic time on the stage! His lines were delivered with gusto (although not always with an American accent) and he clearly portrayed a man who loved and was proud of his daughter.

TRACEY HACKETT (Lottie Child): A good actress with a clear voice. She clearly showed the haughtiness of her rich and privileged status and her annoyance and disappointment with her son Bobby. I absolutely loved the moments with Irene and Bobby where their continuous dialogue filtered in and out between miming and actual vocals. Not an easy thing to do, but she, and the other two made it look easy!

MATTHEW WALDIE (Eugene Fodor): A lovely character actor. I loved his portrayal of Eugene. The comic timing and facial expressions were spot on and made me chuckle. He also made a great, laid-back cowboy. A very enjoyable performance.

CAROLE HART (Patricia Fodor): Another lovely character actor. She was so funny as Patricia. Great comic timing and facial expressions. The pairing of Carole & Matthew together was perfect. I loved that you both rallied the troops in 'Stiff Upper Lip', then in the end you didn't even want to help! Lol. Very well done.

DANCERS: (**Karla Marie**-Tess, **Heather Davis**-Mitzi, **Kirsty Lloyd**-Patsy, **Rachael Ings**-Louise, **Poppy Taylor**-Susie):

A bright and enthusiastic performance from all the dancers. Each one gave convincing performances as showgirls, giving strong individual characters with differing styles and personalities. Tess led them very well and all lines were well delivered. The company numbers did need some tidying and finessing, but the 'Slap That Bass' number was very strong and highly enjoyable to watch. Well done.

COWBOYS: (**Louis Bartlett**-Moose, **Simon Posse**-Mingo, **Kieran Wingrove**-Junior, **Richard Herring**-Jimmy, **Gary Rolph**, **Matthew Waldie**, **Robbie Robertson**):

They all made such a lovely bunch of cowboys, all with completely different personalities which were all clearly shown throughout by these gentlemen. They gave it their 'all' in the company numbers and I really loved their 'cowboy death scenes'! I wish we could have seen a few more fancy dance moves from Kieran as he was a strong dancer. A nice job gents.

ENSEMBLE: (**Anita Goold**, **Sharon Lindsell**, **Celia Greaves**, **Elizabeth Chapman**, **Rhoda Taylor**):

Every member of the ensemble was lovely to watch. I wish we had been able to see more of you as you were all vital in portraying the backstage/costume crew etc. You all handled your roles well and always stayed in character! Some of the dance moves could have done with a tidy up, but you all looked like you were having a blast!

OVERALL PRODUCTION:

I found this to be an entertaining production with lots of strong acting throughout. The set was excellent, and the lighting was spot on and effective, the sound was not always level, but generally okay. The transitions from scene to scene were smooth, slick, and clean. The staging was of a good standard, but the choreography and delivery needed a little finessing. There were lots of elements I greatly enjoyed with many 'chuckle' moments. I found this production to be full of fun and everyone looked like they were having a great time! Well done WAOS.

Best wishes

Amanda Powell (Adjudicator)