

THEATRE REPORTS FOR APRIL 2019 – MARCH 2020



General Introduction

Whilst this year is ending on unprecedented times with us having to cancel the next few trips, we have managed to enjoy a varied programme over this last year. We've attended 11 shows covering a range of themes – musicals, dramas and an operetta – and had the opportunity to see some outstanding and memorable performances including *Les Misérables* and Robert Lindsay in *Prism*.

The following report is based on the views from committee members who attended the shows.

Overview of productions

We started the year with *Les Misérables*. This was an outstanding, gripping and tear-jerking performance, judged to be far better than the film and a show that we could have sat through again! It was expensive at £68 but good value as the singing was superb with standout performances from Killian Donnelly as Valjean and Katie Hall as Fantine. We had excellent seats which helped us to immerse ourselves in the drama and helped us to forget the rather stressful journey because of an accident on the motorway making our arrival in time for the show doubtful.

It was good to have a trip to Clwyd for *Stones In His Pockets* but unfortunately it wasn't as good as hoped and the format of just two actors playing all 20 characters didn't work. We had to work very hard to keep up with the actors as they changed from character to character. Dialogue was fast, perhaps too fast so that the point of the play was lost as we marvelled at the actors' ability to move to yet another part with a change in mannerism or voice.

Captain Corelli turned out to be a creative and successful adaptation of the book and film. It was a very moving, innovative, modern adaptation with superb new music and creative stagecraft involving a large sheet of jagged metal which at times appeared to be the sea and at others the fire and blood of war. We enjoyed wonderful body language from Pelagia (Madison Clare), a delightful Pine Marten and bleating goat played by actorseven though the dialogue was quite indistinct at times. It was outstanding value at £26.

Whilst *Amelie* was enjoyed at the time it appears to have soon faded from the memory of those who attended!

Measure For Measure at the RSC didn't rely on old-fashioned presentation and was an interesting production set at the turn of the century with the comedic elements lifting the rather depressing theme of hypocrisy in politics. Use of the trapdoor for entry and exit of the prisoner was inspired. Lucy Phelps, as Isabella, was outstanding and clearly conveyed the frustration of a woman who is used sexually and has no power to protest. On the other hand, Sandy Grierson's portrayal of Angelo didn't impress some with his strong Scottish accent.

The Mikado never fails to be enjoyable and this was a lively production with good singing and orchestration which had us all humming along to the well-known tunes. Both Ko-Ko and Nanki-Poo gave excellent performances.

Deciding to go to Prism was a bit of a gamble as the committee knew nothing about the play, which is based on the life of cinematographer Jack Cardiff. However, it proved to be the highlight of the year for some with an outstanding performance from Robert Lindsay, who stepped on to the stage, using a garage door to explain the way in which cinema screen size has evolved. It was a superb and sensitive telling of an interesting man's decline into dementia, as he recalls his Hollywood days with the likes of hard-drinking, hard-living types such as Humphrey Bogart and John Huston. It was a brilliant play although some did think it marred by the strong language.

Cabaret was wonderfully executed and very emotional with the ill treatment of Jews and Gay men. We were surprised at just how shocking it was. It was excellent theatre but given the theme, impossible to say that it was enjoyed as we all left silent and contemplative.

Cousin Rachel with its typical Du Maurier plot was another excellent atmospheric production with stunning stage sets and costumes keeping the audience firmly in a country house in Cornwall. Helen George was maybe a little disappointing but overall, it was an enjoyable show.

The response to Blithe Spirit took us by surprise with 102 people booked and the theatre full. The draw had to be Jennifer Saunders rather than Noel Coward's drama. This was a good, interesting, enjoyable production with Jennifer Saunders as the eccentric medium and the actors playing the husband, his two wives and the parlour maid giving top class performances. The set was very effective with some impressive special effects to end an entertaining afternoon. It was a fun day out and good to see Jennifer Saunders in a stage play. How could anyone not enjoy it?

We ended the year with a trip to Liverpool to see the King and I which still went ahead despite some members having to cancel at the last minute because of COVID-19. It was a thoroughly enjoyable show with excellent music and singing plus an outstanding dance routine. It was a good show to end the year with.

Closing comments

In conclusion, we are particularly grateful to Ken for his reviews which help enormously with our understanding and enjoyment of our trips.

And lastly, we're looking forward to being able to resume normal service and offer you some exciting productions. All our events can be found on our web site at www.strettontheatreandconcert.net/

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