



Be inspired by amateur theatre

Society : Reading Operatic Society
Production : Legally Blonde
Date : Thursday 20th April
Venue : Hexagon Reading
Report by : Jeanette Maskell

[Show Report](#)

This is such a fun show with a witty script and some great characters. Although I find some of the songs a little tuneless there are nonetheless some clever humorous lyrics. This had been extremely well-cast with some outstanding performances from principals and the ensemble.

I must congratulate the technical crew who were absolutely magnificent in their artistic creativity and I am sure the director must have been over the moon with their contribution to the overall performance.

Laura Newborough – (Elle Woods) – Omigod You Guys this was an outstanding performance! She was bubbly and effervescent with delightfully animated facial expressions. Her dialogue sparkled throughout; with impeccable diction in both dialogue and song. She looked fabulous and her deportment was perfect as she traversed effortlessly from scene to scene. She forged some excellent relationships with the other characters especially her three girlfriends, Paulette and Emmitt. I liked the way her character developed and became stronger without losing her sense of girly fun. She has a superlative singing voice and all her numbers were put over in character but the highlight for me was the title number.

Ryan Stevens – (Emmitt Forrest) – I really liked this quirky characterisation. He was so natural and easy going with an instinctive and giving persona. His dialogue was dramatic and rhythmic and his speaking voice had a light smooth timbre perfect for the character. The chemistry between him and Elle was subtle and astute which created the ideal partnership. He has a fine singing voice and he put all his numbers over brilliantly but I really enjoyed “Chip on My Shoulder”

Ben Tait – (Warner Huntington III) – This was an exceptionally charismatic performance. He portrayed Elle’s shallow pompous boyfriend perfectly; but there were times when you caught him looking rather longingly at her as though he wished he had not so unceremoniously dumped her. His manner bearing and demeanour were all first rate and this enhanced the skilful delivery of his dialogue and singing. The tone of the voice really suited his singing and “Serious” was well sung and great fun.

Fliiss Bott – (Vivienne Kensington) – As the smart savvy law student this young lady was ideal. Her deportment was upright and reserved and her dialogue classy and elegant with plenty of light and shade. I liked the way her character evolved from having a total dislike of Elle to standing up for her and showing her admiration. Her part in “There right There” and “Legally Blonde Remix” was excellent.

Ashleigh Wells – (Professor Callahan) – This young man gave a sterling performance as the immoral sleazy manipulative Harvard professor. His gorgeous deep speaking voice lent itself

to the strong dialogue which he delivered with great aplomb. He carried himself with a confident self-assuredness befitting the character and his interaction with the other characters was first rate. He has an inimitable singing voice and “Blood in the Water” was superb.

Charley Woodward – (Paulette Bonafontè) – This was a standout performance; everything about her character, dialogue accent singing and movement was perfect and could not be faulted. She was bubbly, dynamic and animated her vivacious personality was contagious putting everyone she interacted with at ease. She is a natural comedienne and really brought out all the fun of the character. Her relationship with Kyle was amusing and entertaining and a highlight of the evening. She has the most amazing singing voice and “Ireland” was stunning and the best thing I have heard in long while. She so deserved the thunderous applause she received.

Laura Stocker - (Brooke Wyndham) – This role requires a lot of strength and stamina, and this young lady had both. Although she missed several rope jumps during her number she still captured the essence of the song by directing the lyrics at the other inmates. The song was sung with zest and fervour and her movement complimented this fully. Her dialogue was dynamic containing great modulation, and she brought a good deal of fun to the role. She worked well with Elle and their Delta Nu Nu Nu was terrific.

Emily Hawkes - (Enid Hoopes) – As the opinionated feminist this young lady was a knockout. Her dialogue was strong clear and well inflected. Her demeanour certainly enhanced her character through which she brought out every ounce of humour from the script. I rather enjoyed the slightly dumb inflection she wove into the role and was taken with her comedic ability and apt timing.

Charlotte Tait – (Margot)

Millie Clucas – (Serena)

Sherridan Povey – (Pilar) – This trio was fantastic! They were diverse in their characterisations; one sassy yet sensible, one ditsy and daffy and one energetically athletic; but worked together consummately. Their dialogue singing and movement was outstanding bringing vitality and vivacity to the performance. Well done girls!

Abi Walker – (Kate)

Cherie Emmitt – (Elle’s Mom/Store Manager)

Ben Huddell – (Grandmaster Chad/Kyle B O’Boyle) – Although these were minor characters they made the most of everything they were given to do. Kate looked perfect as the studious bookworm, Elle’s mum delightfully tipsy and Kyle fit smooth talking and a rather super dancer.

Stuart Neal – (Winthrop/TV Reporter)

Nick Brannam – (Lowell)

George Apap – (Pfortzheimer) – As the Harvard law admission officers these three complimented each other extremely well. They had well delineated characters that were great fun displaying super visuals and dynamic movement. Dialogue was well delivered with great diction and projection. They all had good singing voices and made “What you Want” humorous and light hearted.

Alex Essery - (Aaron Schultz)

Jordan Lyford – (Sundee Padaman/Carlos)

Luke Sayers – (Nikos Argitakos) – These minor characters were exceptional. Their portrayals were perfect for the roles they were performing with excellent dialogue and singing. Carlos and Nikos were hilarious and their courtroom scene was a highlight of the evening.

Hollie Walker – (Leilani)

Kayleigh Hollobone – (Kristine)

Emma Keeley – (Cece)

Emily Johnson – (Gabby)

Lauren Stocker – (Sabrina) – This quintet was delightful; they were visually animated and sang and danced with the greatest aplomb. They supported the main cast famously in every scene in which they were involved

Beth Rutland – (Saleswoman/Whitney/DA Joyce Riley)

Charlie Scott – (Judge)

Ellen Darke – (Court Stenographer)

Sarah Leigh – (Chutney Wyndham) – These four young ladies had well delineated characters and performed their scenes famously. They can be assured that they supported the principals superbly adding to a stunning performance. Special mention for Chutney's brilliant accent and dialogue!

Ensemble – This group worked tirelessly throughout the performance giving their absolute all to everything they did. Their verve and energy was second to none and it was obvious they enjoyed every moment they were on stage. They performed all their numbers brilliantly and are to be commended on their commitment to the production.

Nick Brannam – (Director/Choreographer) – I was so impressed with this director's interpretation it brought the show to life and showcased the acting skills of his cast; in so doing he created in them boundless energy and enthusiasm. He ensured the characters had depth rather than being frivolous caricatures and this really brought dimension and understanding to the plot. I loved the way he utilised the cast in assisting with set changes as this kept the action moving giving the show great pace.

His choreography was amazingly diverse with an emphasis on fun; the cheerleaders' routine was bouncy and dynamic the Greek chorus sassy and cheeky and "Whipped into Shape" energetic vigorous and spirited. For the most part the cast were well drilled and uniformly in step, however on the evening of my visit there were one or two small mishaps; but this did nothing to detract from overall visual effect. It was also refreshing to see an outstanding young male dancer being promoted and given solo work.

Thomas Joy – (Musical Director) – Here is another young man that deserves much credit and praise. I was blown away with the diction of the whole cast; I understood every word that was being sung. Not something I say very often I can tell you! He ensured the cast understood the lyrics and were therefore able to perform all the numbers knowingly with great pizzazz. Entries were confident and timings spot on. His expertise in directing an orchestra was brilliant and he made certain the balance between pit and stage was perfect. The musicians accompanied the performers sympathetically never overpowering but always giving the audience that wonderful brassy sound they wanted.

David Parsonson - (Production Manager) – Well done Mr Parsonson on a producing such an outstanding production. It must have taken a great deal of time and effort to bring such a huge production together.

Carol Hodgkinson/Chris Dinsey/James Cook – (Stage Manager/Deputy SM's) – Assisted by the **Crew** – This was such a busy stage with an extremely large set. However it was tightly run by the SM who ensured all changes were effected quickly quietly and efficiently keeping the action moving fluently from one scene to the next.

Kim Hollamby – (Lighting Design) – Assisted by **Louis Martin/Mike Boswell** - I absolutely revelled in this breath taking plot. I'm not a great lover of red lighting however on this occasion the use of it really worked. The lighting that flooded the stage in the general scenes was warm and inviting, with remarkably intimate spot lit areas which enabled the crew to change the set in the darkened recesses. The star curtain was well lit meaning it enhanced the scenes in which it was used rather than detracting. The brilliant white spot that hit the Greek chorus was stunning creating a powerful impact.

Daniel Paine – (Sound Design) – Although on the evening of my visit there were numerous missed mic cues the overall sound was superb; it was the best I have heard in this venue. The balance was excellent especially the stage mics meaning the ensemble could be heard as easily as the principals.

Jessica Costello/Olivia Irving – (Properties) – What a great job this pair had done! The clothes shop was particularly effective with piles of shirts on the shelves, jackets on a hanging rail and ties attractively arranged on a revolving rack. Everything was perfect for its usage from the magazines laptops and hair parlour paraphernalia to the dog basket, violin and furniture.

Dylan Dambella/Pam Dennis – (Make-up Design) – I really liked the make-up it was fresh and natural whilst epitomising the youth of the day. It had been well applied and enhanced the visual effect of all cast members.

Yvonne Maynard/Lyne Drew – (Wardrobe) – with costumes supplied by **The Society/Lowestoft Musical Theatre** – these were fabulous the colours were bright and colourful encapsulating the tone of the show. Every costume seemed perfect for the character especially Kyle's UPS delivery uniform the orange prison uniforms and the Greek chorus. The three girls' costumes defined their personalities superbly and Elle's were lavishly striking. I could go on but will stop by saying they were all sensational and I could not fault anything that anyone wore.

Yvonne Maynard – (Programme) – designed by **Andy Higgs** with photos by **Brian Burden** – This was a good quality programme although I found the yellow and white writing on pink paper rather difficult to read. It had been well put together was interesting and informative, with clear cast photos. The cover design was clever having the girly pink gown in the foreground and the usual black gown in the background.

Set – (Scenic Projects) – This set was obviously newly built and really showed; being fresh and vibrant. It was perfectly equipped for every scene and worked tremendously well.

Thank you

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Jeanette Maskell - NODA Representative - London Region - Area 13