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Society : Reading Operatic Society  
Production : Singing in the Rain  
Date : Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> September 2017  
Venue : The Hexagon Theatre - Reading  
Report by : Jeanette Maskell

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[Show Report](#)

I so enjoyed this lively energetic show! There were some excellent principal performances and some outstanding choreographic routines.

**Ryan Stevens** – (Don Lockwood) – This was a terrific all round performance. He worked well with all the cast but specially Cosmo with whom he looked natural and easy; singing swaying and tapping and with Kathy he created a believable rapport that won the audience from the start. His dialogue and singing were charismatic lively and animated; whilst his dancing had a natural fluidity. This was most noticeable during his excellently accomplished rendition of “Singing in the Rain”

**Sherridan Povey** – (Kathy Seldon) – As Don’s love interested this young lady was warm caring and sympathetic; however I would have liked a little more spunk and determination. Her dialogue was well depicted with some good intonation visually she was expressive vital and alive and her singing joyful, though not always the most tuneful. Her tap dancing was extraordinary and “Good Morning” was unparalleled.

**Nick Brannam** – (Cosmo Brown) – What a performance this was! He was in every sense of the word a true “Hooper”. His athleticism and boundless energy were incomparable and all I can say is Donald O’Connor eat your heart out! His fine singing voice really suited all his numbers but “Make ‘em Laugh” was an absolute show stopper! An outstanding performance – Congratulations!

**Charley Woodward** – (Lina Lamont) – How did this young lady keep up that irritating voice throughout even during her song; amazing! This was a knockout performance; she had the ditzy fickle character off to a T but also managed to bring out the cruel bitchiness when needed. Her dialogue was dynamic and expressive with visuals that complemented her personality. “What’s wrong with me” was so bad it was brilliant it really had me laughing out loud.

**Barrie Scott** – (RF Simpson) – This was a well delineated character with strong colourful dialogue. His visuals were excellent and I really liked the way you could see his mind working as he tried to save the film and his studio. He carried himself with an assuredness that befitted the role perfectly and his rapport with Roscoe was brilliant.

**George Apap** – (Roscoe Dexter) – This actor had good comic timing and really hammed up his character which worked extremely well. His dialogue was striking and spirited and his facial expressions were superlative.

**Sarah Abbott** – (Dora Bailey) – Unfortunately I was not able to understand a lot of this young lady's dialogue. Whether her microphone was too close to her mouth thereby distorting the dialogue I am unsure but it is something to be aware of for the future. However her animated visuals body language and hand gestures were perfect for her character.

**Ben Hudell** – (Rod/Show Tenor) – This young man gave a nicely delineated character as Rod with well-delivered dialogue which was accurately punctuated. As the show tenor fronting "Beautiful Girls" he had the chance to show off his vocal skills. His voice suited the number famously (though there were a couple of tense top notes) however he looked cool and suave with movement that complemented the character

**Nicola Morrin** – (Zelda) – As Lina's best friend this young lady gave a truly spirited performance. She forged a great rapport with Lina which in today's world would be judged as real girly bessies! Dialogue was vivacious vibrant and well projected.

**Amie Jones** – (Temptation Singer) – What a superb singing voice this young lady had! She was absolutely perfect in for this role

**Rhiannon Rowlands** – (Olga Margaret)

**Ellen Darke** – (Mary Margaret)

**Nicola Jaggar** – (Lady in Waiting)

**Gemma Didcock/Samanthan Prior/Ellen Darke** – (Assistants)

**Sarah Werner** – (Miss Dinsmore)

**Sarah Leigh** – (Voice Coach)

**Gloria Griffiths** – (Wardrobe Assistant) – This group of actors supported the principals splendidly in their scenes. There was some super dynamic dialogue which was well projected; and some nicely effective hand and body gestures.

**Kayleigh Hollobone** – (Stripper)

**Dianne Familoe/Gemma Didcock/Nicola Jaggar/Sarah Seabrook** – (Clowns) – I really enjoyed the performances these young ladies delivered. The leggy stripper made her mark totally with some brassy sassy moves and the clowns were delightfully amusing and were obviously having a blast.

**Stuart Brookfield** – (Policeman)

**Haydn Rees** – (Sid Phillips)

**Andrew Johnson** – (Sound Engineer) – Here we have three small characters that were nonetheless integral to the action. They all performed their parts with finesse, good well-delivered dialogue and natural fluid movement.

**Harry Dew** – (Young Don)

**Jake Didcock** – (Young Cosmo) – These two youngsters were great! They were natural animated and moved rather well. A couple destined to go a lot further in the theatrical world.

**Showgirls** – These girls were fabulous! They looked stunning and had all the glitz and glamour associated with showgirls. Their movement was precise synchronised and delightfully sassy.

**Dancers/Ensemble** – The ensemble were great; they threw themselves into every piece of action singing and moving with gusto. They were animated lively and enthusiastic creating a super backing for the principals

**Jennifer Scott** – (Director) – This is one production she should be very proud of! Her direction had style pace and panache with great staging, blocking and intimacy. She had worked meticulously with the principals to create super characterisations and the work she had done with the minor characters and chorus really paid off as it enhanced the performance greatly. Her overall vision was creative and artistic and one which the audience appreciated immensely. Congratulations Jennifer!

**Neil Matthews** – (Musical Director) – It was clear from the off the time and commitment this MD had given to principals and chorus; entries were confident and timing perfect. He had worked on diction which was impeccable and greatly added to the plot. He had gathered together a super band and kept control with ease.

**Gemma Hough** – (Choreographer) – Well done Gemma your choreography was absolutely stunning. The work you must have put in to create those outstanding routines and then have the dancers perfect them to the standard they achieved was nothing short of astounding. This reflects on all routine and not just the tap!

**David Parsonson** – (Production Manager) – Once again David worked his magic in bringing together a flawless production. The society is lucky to have such a conscientious committed production manager.

**Carol Hodgkinson** – (Stage Manager) – **James Cook/Chris Dinsey** – (ASMs) and **Crew** I have to say I was a little disappointed in the running of this stage. Whilst I appreciate the set was large cumbersome and weighty the crew appeared lethargic and laborious in the setting and changing of the sets; and this in turn did impact on the fluidity of the action.

**Kim Hollamby** – (Lighting Design) – This was a nice plot that used plenty of colour enhancing the action. I was particularly impressed with the use of colour during “You were meant for me”. There was great atmospheric lighting in the scenes outside the theatre, throughout the title number and during Lina’s “What’s wrong with Me”

**Adrian Croton** – (Lighting Technician) – and assistants **Louis Martin/Tommy Williams** – These technicians worked so hard to ensure everything happened seamlessly; and it did! The films ran smoothly and looked so appropriately 1920’s. There was a good use of spot light which was expertly worked.

**Dan Bryan** – (Sound Design/Operation) – At the start of the performance I felt some actors were over amplified which made their voices sound rather harsh; however the overall balance from the stage to the audience was spot on. Stage mics were superb meaning the chorus was heard perfectly

**Steve Brannam** – (Sound 2) – I am assuming sound 2 incorporates sound effects; if so they were super I really liked all the applause clips which genuinely sounded as though they were

in the theatre. All other effects were appropriate for the piece and sounded authentic especially the thunder.

**Scenic Projects** – (Scenery/Properties) – This set looked super and gave the director plenty of scope to manage the cast in the numerous scenes. The street scene was superb and really made the show.

**Samantha Prior** – (Properties) – There was plenty of props to keep this young lady busy. However she coped admirably ensuring everything was in the right place at the right time and everyone had their personal props. Lina's dressing room was especially well dressed.

**Dylan Dambella** – (Make-up) - I liked the way the makeup had been applied with lips and eyes being prominent befitting the period. Bases had a nice tone and texture complementing the complexions of the cast.

**Pam Dennis/Mena Zottarelli** – (Hair Stylists) – These two created styles that suited the character and yet maintained the look of the era. I particularly liked Cathy's soft curls which framed her face perfectly.

**Yvonne Maynard/Jennifer Scott** – (Costume Co-ordinators) – Principal costumes were super looking authentic to the period and suited to the characters. The showgirls, stripper and clown costumes were perfect and really looked effective. However what a shame the chorus had been left to their own devices. I noticed leggings, flared trousers losing fitting tops not even belted! In fact they looked as though they had walked in off the street and onto the stage. This is something that should be thought about for future period pieces.

**Programme** – designed by Ryan Stevens and photos by **Brian Burden** I liked this programme it was fresh and bright with an excellent use of colour. However I did hear a disappointed member of the audience say I wonder why they used a yellow umbrella throughout the programme and then give Don a nondescript grey one? For me it was a striking addition which really enhanced the look and feel of the programme.

Thank you

**Jet**

Jeanette Maskell - NODA Representative - London Region - Area 13