



## **ROSE BOWL ADJUDICATION**

Name of Company: Trowbridge Musical Theatre

Name of Production: My Fair Lady

Venue: The Civic, Trowbridge

Date: Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2023 (matinee)

Adjudicator: Mike Clark

### **PRESENTATION/SETTING by Phil Courage, Robin Bailes, Bob Spence, Cameron & Connor Runyerard-Hunt, Steven Riddle, Stu Langford, Maria Matthews & Wendy Wenham.**

The constant switching between various locations is a challenge for the technical team of any company staging this show. I thought your basic concept of hinged flats that opened up during street scenes and closed during indoor scenes was a sound one. It was a simple solution to maintaining pace during scene changes. The constant presence of the outside of Higgins' house and the brick lanes around Tottenham Court Road were fairly well done, although the pillars of Covent Garden did look a little 'tired'. I have to assume that these structures were so large in order to accommodate set dressings etc stored within them. The problem this created was that they hugely restricted the playing space left to your actors. The set-piece 'big' numbers must have been a massive challenge to your director and choreographer and I thought the company did extremely well in managing the routines within the tight space.

### **Lighting & Sound by Tony Giddings & Will Wilkinson**

I'm afraid I must be honest and say that this aspect of the production was somewhat disappointing. There were far too many occasions when scenes were underlit or so biased to the overhead lighting that actors' faces were

completely in shadow; the first verse of 'Poor Professor Higgins' for example. Lighting design should concentrate on the three 'A's – Actors, Action & Atmosphere; can we see the actors? Can we see what they are doing? Is the atmosphere created by the lighting appropriate? There was also inconsistent coverage of lights across the stage, so that as actors crossed left to right they went into & out of light. Some cueing could also have been crisper – the first scene in Higgins' rooms being one example. I apologise if this sounds harsh, but I can only report on what I saw.

The sound was generally well balanced, never easy to achieve with head mics and a live orchestra. I did think that on occasion the volume of some head mics could have been faded slightly during dialogue.

### **Musical Direction by Helen Heaton and her Orchestra**

Well done Helen, I thought the orchestra sounded great, particularly the brass section. The numbers were tight and beautifully balanced with your vocalists. There were some lovely vocal harmonies at times which is a testament to hard work by you and the company during rehearsals.

### **WARDROBE by Sandra Tucker, Karen Grant & Pat Burtenshaw**

Well done Ladies I thought the company looked wonderfully period and a coherent approach was evident across the production. I did think the cockney characters' clothes could have been a little dirtier. I note from the programme that some costumes were hired, but it would be a brave adjudicator who opted to identify which were and which were not. So, I applaud you for making that distinction so difficult. I will just say the Ascot scene was beautifully dressed and Eliza's ball gown was stunning. Well done.

### **Choreography by Anna Mazan**

Anna I think you had a very tricky brief to fulfil, the limited space in which to move your dancers must have given you nightmares. However, I think you managed this extremely well. I also applaud you for keeping the routines relatively simple, a wise move given my comment above. I did enjoy 'The Rain in Spain' very much, all those little Flamenco/Paso touches were greatly appreciated. Well done.

### **Direction by Phil Courage**

Phil, I think there was much to like in this production. There were a few occasions of masking, Mrs Pearce was placed too far down stage a couple of times which meant your audience SR could not see the actors behind her. I would recommend moving around the auditorium when blocking a scene, it

will give you the audience's perspective from differing locations. Also be careful how furniture is placed. The placement in Mrs Higgins' house made life difficult for actors squeezing between the screen & the chairs. All that being said, I thought you kept the pace moving very well and the changes of scene were as quick as they could possibly have been and you managed to move your actors around the very tight space generally very well. I loved all the synchronised movement during the Ascot scene, it's not easy to get that many people moving exactly together with the same point of focus, well done. I also liked the way you managed the developing relationship between Henry & Eliza, this is key to the success of a production of this show, the audience MUST care about both of them, and we did.

### **Eliza Doolittle played by Connie Knight**

Connie you have such a sweet voice and you were note perfect in the performance I saw. I thought you managed the vocal dynamic during numbers very well. I would be very surprised if you have not had some dance training in the past, your movement and sense of balance was beautiful to watch. The sitting in the 'enormous chair' move was brilliantly executed. I very much enjoyed the journey you underwent during the performance, transforming Eliza from the street urchin of the beginning through to the independent woman confident in her own worth, at the end. As I mentioned earlier the relationship with Henry has to be believable for the show to work as anything other than some nice songs bunched together. We need to engage with the *story* and the characters and you achieved this goal, well done.

### **Henry Higgins played by Sean Andrews**

This role will forever be associated with Rex Harrison, but I think you did Mr Harrison proud. Technically this is a difficult role to play, on the surface he is misanthropic and displays a degree of misogyny along with a total disdain for the manners of Victorian society. All of which makes him a difficult character for the audience to like and therefore to care about. BUT, you also managed in the latter stages of the story to demonstrate his inner vulnerability, and so they did care, well done. I thought you had exactly the right delivery of his numbers and handled the difficult timings within them with aplomb.

### **Alfred P Doolittle played by Paul West**

Doolittle is a Vehicle for Shaw's view of middle class morality in the original Pygmalian. The audience must see a man who is absolutely content with his lot as a member of the underserving poor, and I think that essentially your

audience did. I thought you had a good handle on the thoroughly disreputable nature of Doolittle, but I did think there could have been a little more energy produced during the dialogue scenes; energy that was definitely evident during your numbers 'With a Little Bit of Luck' being a great example. Well done.

### **Colonel Pickering played by Robin Jukes**

Well done Robin,

I thought you had a good grasp of this character's colonial/military background and, most importantly, gave your audience a 'man of honour'. This is essential, as Pickering must present the antithesis of Higgins, where Higgins is rude and abrupt with no regard for Victorian manners, Pickering must be the very embodiment of those values. I could see that you worked very hard on the correct diction, which was great, however, this did have a tendency to slow down your delivery and therefore, pace in a scene could be lost. I would like to see you trying to maintain pace of delivery whilst achieving crisp diction. But well done Robin.

### **Freddy Eynesford-Hill played by Noah Heard**

Noah, small things distract an audience, it may be a cup that is obviously empty or a costume detail that is out of period. This distraction will remove the audience from the fiction, as they consider that distraction, rather than being engaged with the story *in the moment*. I'm afraid your hair was this distraction for me. A young man of Freddy's age and social standing would never have hair below the collar. In future either, find a way of getting it up or bite the bullet and cut it. Also I want you to think about your posture. Freddy is from the upper echelons of Victorian society, he would have been told his entire life to 'stand up straight!'. An actor has to think about how an audience read signals. A stooped posture and hands constantly being wrung is more likely a signifier of humility and lower status. I hope you can see where I am trying to lead you. I want you to think a little more about history and status of your characters, because I think you have great potential, you have a fantastic voice and I wish you every success with auditions for drama school.

### **Mrs Higgins played by Ann Berry**

Well done Ann, you gave us a beautifully spoken Mrs Higgins, with a wonderful sense of grandeur. I think there could have been even more disdain in your first scene, but I thought you warmed wonderfully well to Eliza in your later scene and the enjoyment of Henry's pain was delightful.

### **Mrs Pearce played Lorraine Ferguson**

Well done Lorraine, you had a beautifully Victorian posture and looked every inch the steadfast housekeeper. Just be careful where you are placed on stage, I know space was tight but there were times when you were masking other actors, upstage of you. I thought you struck just the right maternal note where Eliza was concerned, well done.

### **The Company**

Here's the thing – a show can have exceptional lead performances, and they will attract plaudits from audiences, but what will make an **entire** production successful is ----TEAMWORK! I think you all added tremendously to this production from the cheeky cockney lads to the frightfully proper Ascot ladies. You all managed the restrictions of the playing space very well and are to be congratulated. I enjoyed the show very much.

***Thank you so much for your welcome and hospitality and I REALLY look forward to seeing you again soon.***

***Mike Clark***