



## ROSE BOWL ADJUDICATION

Name of Company: Trowbridge Musical Theatre Society

Name of Production: A WALK THROUGH THE WEST END

Venue: Civic Centre Trowbridge

Date: Friday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2023

Adjudicator: Caroline Whitehead

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### **An evening of entertainment**

I always think that 'revue' shows are difficult to adjudicate. And we get plenty of them, with clubs endeavouring to regain some much needed funds that their main show might have drained. They also give opportunities for members who don't necessarily make the grade for the leads in shows to have their moment in the spotlight. And that means that some numbers are really good and others are more challenging, making it difficult to award an overall 'score' for the show as a whole. So, it was with some trepidation that I embarked upon my notes for this show. I needn't have worried. This was an evening of really top quality entertainment that allowed many performers to demonstrate their talent and show the audience what they were made of. You have a really wide range of ages and styles – some comic, some dramatic and some effervescent – in your Society and we saw all of these on parade.

I came away so happy that this talent, in my local town, was thriving and that local people were able to enjoy it. That is what amateur theatre is all about and I congratulate all of you for putting such a well managed show together.

I will comment on each show set to a greater or lesser degree where I think my comments might be useful but really there was not a poor one in the mix at all and I apologise in advance if I miss someone out. All of your performances were excellent.

## **The Show as a whole**

You had a very wide stage and this presented some challenges I'm sure. Well done for leaving the far reaches as 'off stage' spots. It was also shallow and when everyone was on stage it did look a bit crowded and this limited what you could do with the choreography and blocking. Lighting was effective and that back starcloth was a good constant. You did have some sound issues, often when there were Company numbers and that was a shame, but the solos were well balanced. I never like the echo reverb and there were a few times when I didn't think this was necessary. Costumes were limited to subtle additions in some shows. Once or twice I felt you could have made more of an entrance. A couple that spring to mind are the entrance of Jamie (I was looking for an amazing dress and higher heels!) and Edna in Hairspray (the wig wasn't enough for me!).

The small band did a great job and your MD had the entire show in the palm of his hand while staying firmly in the shadows, which was exactly what was needed.

It was a really good idea to do a few numbers from each of your chosen shows. This allowed your audience to settle into the highlighted musical and prevented your show from getting too disconnected. The transitions from one musical to another was very smooth and allowed the audience to be carried along without a break.

## **Waitress**

This was a good opportunity for Jenna (Daisy) to showcase her versatile voice and her acting skills. It was a good start to proceedings and I liked the contrast between delicate and softer phrases of the first song and bigger, more powerful ballad style as the set developed. I was not convinced that the tables coming in and out were worth the effort. The minimalist approach you were taking for the whole show allowed you to get away without all of that movement of props and it was a little distracting from the performance as a whole. As the first number, it took a bit of time for the sound to balance out, particularly of the band versus the chorus, but when that settled down the harmonies were really well balanced. I am not familiar with this musical but the music had some really dramatic moments in it and you dealt with the range of emotions with sensitivity and poise.

## **Jamie**

Pritti (Carisma) had a really resonant voice that had lots of potential and her acting skills were evident, setting the scene for what was to come. Again it took a bit of time to get the sound settled in the big chorus (the challenge being lots of singers having a few lines and their mics not being turned up in time) and the choreography looked a bit muddled. But this is the main theme of the show and I enjoyed the youthful chaos of the school room and the impossible task of the teachers to achieve order. Diction was also excellent in this Company number. I was longing for a more dramatic entrance for Jamie in his dress and heels. Margaret (Lou) did a really great job with 'He's My Boy'. This is such an iconic song and mothers all over the world will resonate with the trauma of the lyrics. There was excellent contrast in this performance and you weren't afraid to pare your voice right back in the tender moments rather than belting it all out (which I have heard in the West End) so congratulations for that. I felt myself wondering whether this should have been the second number of this segment, allowing the Company number to be the conclusion but then I saw the overlap with another emotional mother in the next segment Evan Hansen, which worked so well.

## **Evan Hansen**

Another mother dealing with a challenging teenage boy, Heidi (Caroline) gave a supremely polished performance. I am a great fan of this song ('So Big, So Small') but I also know how difficult it is to sing. It's that combination of 'recit and aria' style where the emotional development and lyrics are so critical. Timing was excellent and your MD was perfectly in line with your pace. It was a very emotional and moving performance. Well done. Evan (Ben) did a good job with being the edgy and nervous character, and Connor's sister Zoe (Becky) made the ballad 'Only Us' really tender and poignant. There were some delicate phrases in this segment that I thoroughly enjoyed. It was the perfect close to what was a fairly serious and passionate set of show segments before you got the audience smiling and laughing in the Joseph medley.

## **Joseph**

Here was the light relief and this Company number started really strong, with a solid performance by Joseph (Andrew). These songs are a gift for making a medley and for getting your audience to respond and the chorus of brothers for 'One More Angel' really got everyone smiling. Bernice did a good job with her solo piece and her diction was spot on. For me, the highlight was Tim Hobbs' performance for the 'Benjamin' number. This was very funny and Tim is to be congratulated for his comic timing and delightful dance moves! Choreography worked really well in this medley and brought a new dimension of light entertainment to this Act.

## **Les Miserables**

Javert (Tim) brought a contrast to the lightness of the Joseph medley and his dramatic entrance was powerful and effective. Diction was perfect and it's so important in this number. We saw the versatility of this performer (having been so funny in the previous segment) and I liked the intensity of the performance. Javert is on the brink of suicide at this point in the story and we definitely felt the passion and torment of this character. Just take care that in forcing those high notes you don't lose your pitch. Great final note though! Eponine (Natalia) looked the part and really captured the love-sick girl suffering from unrequited love. Here we had yet another really polished solo performance, full of emotion and delicate phrases. Good diction, perfect pitch and took us on a journey into her heart. The finale to Act One was the perfect end to a very entertaining first half and the small pieces of costumes added to set the scene were effective. It's a very challenging piece, with so many characters all singing their own themes. At one end we had the two Thenardiers, whilst at the other end of the stage we had the entrance of Marius, Cosette (such a challenging high range for you, well done) Enjolras and Jean Valjean. I heard all of these themes and I congratulate all of you for pulling this off. You richly deserved the rapturous applause from the audience as we broke for the interval.

## **Book of Mormon**

'Hello' was a funny and well timed chorus with the sound effects and there was much laughter in the room. This Company number was well directed and worked really well. The duet with Elder Price (Ben) and Elder Cunningham (Tim) was a joy. Here again we saw the versatility of Tim (now comic again) and Ben (much more assertive that he was for Evan Hansen). I enjoyed the whole of this number and so did the audience. Really good interaction between the two of you and a perfect finish as the audience showed their appreciation.

## **Six**

Well, here we had six young women who had rehearsed this so well and were totally on their game for this performance. Right from the start I could sense that this was going to be a polished performance. The handheld mics were a good addition. All your characters had been well thought through, you knew all your movements, all your words, all your interactions with the audience and each other and I was very impressed. Diction was excellent so we got to enjoy all the funny quips and for me this was well up there with the professional performances I have seen in the West End. Ann Boleyn (Connie) gave us a magnificent rendition of 'Don't Lose Your Head' and Jane Seymour (Frankie) brought a new and more delicate tone to Heart of Stone until the final sustained note! All six of you were brilliant and this was a real highlight for me.

## **Come From Away**

This is a really great musical and I am sad that it has closed. I don't feel that these two songs really did the show justice because you don't get the story from these two songs. However, once the sound balanced out, 'Welcome to the Rock' worked, mostly because it was fairly static and the harmonies were effective. Beverley (Sarah) gave us a really solid performance of 'Me and the Sky'. You really looked as if you were telling us a story and that nothing else mattered. It's such a beautiful song and you did it justice.

## **Hairspray**

Tracy (Connie) was convincing in Good Morning Baltimore, although I think it was an odd choice to highlight this number from the show. Maybe we were all waiting for the next one, which is the iconic number. That said, you sang beautifully and it was nice to see the contrast to your Ann Boleyn character in the Six segment. For the Company number, the ladies had some nice choreography but the men seemed to be dad dancing which was amusing but I felt they could have been given some better moves. Edna's entrance was well received. Well done Tim. But I would have liked you to have a dress on as well as that wig! Motormouth (Lou) made a big entrance with her red feather boa and this was a really strong performance (and a nice contrast to your anguish in 'He's my Boy').

## **Lion King**

It was a challenge to quieten down the audience after the exuberance of Hairspray in readiness for the Lion King medley and the initial dramatic affect was a bit lost sadly. There are some great anthems in this musical and it made a perfect climax to the show, with some very strong soloists playing the many brilliant roles from this musical. I think you had a few sound issues in 'Hakuna Matata' but these were quickly resolved in 'Can You Feel the Love Tonight' which was a real feel-good number. Everyone on stage for this segment didn't matter at all because the sound was good and it was nice to see everyone singing together and enjoying the climax of the evening.

## **Mamma Mia**

A perfect encore medley with a few more soloists to enjoy. 'I Dreamed a Dream' felt like a bit of a flat start to this Finale but we were soon swept up into 'Mamma Mia, 'Thank you for the Music' and 'Dancing Queen' by which time most of the audience were on their feet. Rapturous applause followed and I am certain that everyone in the auditorium had had a very entertaining evening.

This was a polished production that contained some really excellent performances. It was so nice to see some younger performers who were obviously enjoying their time on stage, along with more experienced performers still enjoying their ability to entertain audiences. I hope to see you again in future productions.

Thank you for warm welcome and I look forward to your next production. Even if I am not adjudicating, I will be coming to see My Fair Lady!

CJW

29/4/2023