

Grease The Musical

DATE	25th February 2022
SOCIETY	Carmarthen & Dist Youth Opera
VENUE	The Lyric Theatre, Carmarthen
TYPE OF PRODUCTION	Musical
DIRECTOR	Daniel Williams
MUSICAL DIRECTOR	Bridget Radford
CHOREOGRAPHER	Rachel Saddler

Report

Author: Matt Hampson

After an 18 month break due to covid and my second show back, CYO were back with a bang! Grease The Musical, made famous of course by John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John has always been a huge crowd pleaser but the full version isn't always taken on by youth companies, so it was great to see it in its fully glory. CYO have a rich history and more recently highlighted in the Sky smash hit film Save Our Cinema. Liz Evans really was the most wonderful person and to see CYO flourishing after all these years, in the same theatre is just incredible. So, onto the production!

Very few movie musicals stand the test of time, but you would be hard pushed to find a member of any generation who doesn't know a number or two from *Grease*. The mega mix is a classic at weddings and school discos alike and it is time to boogie on over to The Lyric Theatre. It is easy to forgive anybody who books a ticket to see *Grease* to think they will be seeing a replica of the 1978 film, but with the musical coming first there's quite the difference in songs, storyline, and featured performers. Unfortunately, it's incredibly difficult to separate the two. Danny and Sandy's relationship (and questionable ending – should you really change *that* much for a boy?) almost feels shoehorned into the stage iteration, and instead, *Grease* is very much an ensemble musical.

With any musical you need an extraordinarily strong Creative team and CYO most definitely had this! Dan, Bridget and Rachel worked this young cast very hard, and it paid off. Exceptionally well-rehearsed, each and every performer on that stage were fantastic. The principals ages did range but it did not show at all. Danny, played by the talented Finn Radford,

swaggered, oozed class and quality from the start, partnered very well with Gwennan Wright who played Sandy. They led the cast from the outset, and I have to mention Gwens solo – Hopelessly Devoted which was outstanding. Rizzo played by Becca Williams and Kenickie played by Llew Richards were very good as well. That love, hate relationship came across very well throughout the show. The 4 supporting ladies – Marty (Mabli Reynolds), Frenchy (Rosie Harries), Jan (Hannah Green) Patty Simcox (Hayley Hume) were also very well cast and embodied these characters with seamless quality. The 4 supporting lads – Doody (Bryn Richards) who I must say has a massive career in this industry) Roger (Taran Jones), Sonny (Dan Bond) & Eugene (Steffan Williams-Evans) were as good as their female cast. The bond on stage, vocals and characters were excellent and the goofiness of Eugene really came across very well indeed.

Of course, no musical will stand on its feet without a great supporting ensemble and CYO consistently bring the future of stage through and provide them with such a great start to their career or hobby. Not a dance step missed or note sung out of time, every time they came on stage they loved every minute and it showed! The Adults roles were covered brilliantly by past members and whilst I won't mention all (because its about the Youth really isn't it) Steff Hughes who played Teen Angel on the Friday night took his moment in the spotlight! It was a breath of fresh air and a great call by the production team to use former members. The production was complimented by a great set and band which doesn't always get a mention but as a creative myself, I fully appreciate a great sound and gorgeous looking stage! The sound once again at the Lyric was bang on and the lighting - faultless.

I could write pages on this production, but I will finish with this – CYO, since you started in 1979 with Liz, you have given the children of Carmarthen and surrounding areas a foundation to rival anywhere. Your values, professionalism, productions and ethos are to be admired from afar. I know Liz will be looking down with that unforgettable smile feeling an immense sense of pride! It is not just about what she started, it's how her legacy and desire is embodied into CYO, its committee, members and supporters. I genuinely cannot wait to see what comes next.

Thank you for such a great evening (and the hospitality goodie bag).