

National Operatic & Dramatic Association

London Area Report



Society : FARINGDON DRAMATIC SOCIETY
Production : DAISY PULLS IT OFF: by DENISE DEEGAN
Date : 10th NOVEMBER 2001
Venue : FARINGDON JUNIOR SCHOOL
Report by : GARETH JEREMY. REGION 12

Thank you for the invitation to review your latest production 'Daisy Pulls It Off' -and may I say immediately, she certainly did.

I felt transported back to the world of 'Girl's Own' and 'School Friend' comics, where trusty heroines always succeed over all adversity. A strong attitude and a definite 'over the top' approach are exactly right for this period play set in the twenty's. You must have had a lot of fun rehearsing the play, and the one thing that struck me most -This Was A Team Effort, and there were NO 'Prima-Donna's.

COSTUMES by JENI SUMMERFIELD and JOAN LEE were convincing of the period. The Hair and Make Up appeared natural, not always easy to achieve a 'fresh face' look for schoolgirls. Well done.

SET DESIGN and CONSTRUCTION. I liked very much the set designed by JO WEBSTER, and constructed by CAROLE & JIM TAPPENDEN; JO & PETER WEBSTER; and ANDREW LOGAN. They made full use of all the stage, which was also used to it's full effect in many different scenes around the school, particularly the imaginative 'Cliff Scene'.

THE DIRECTOR - JOHN TAYLOR, and ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - DEBBIE LOCK had done their homework for this production, and were ably supported by PRODUCER - SARAH VARNOM, and CONTINUITY - LUCY WALDEN.

The play moved along at a good pace, some excellent diction from most the cast, and all the different emotions and humour had been extracted successfully from the play without exception.

Now to the Cast.

SCHOOL PIANIST/MOTHER - KAREN PRICE. Gave a nice feeling of warmth to every-one, and set the tone and scene for the school assembly with her piano music and hymns.

MISS GIBSON (HEADMISTRESS - CAROLE TAPPENDEN. Not quite in control of her script, which on occasions came over as being slightly nervous. Did not give the feeling of total control which would be expected of a headmistress of a school such as Grangewood, with such a tradition to live up to. I did not feel there was enough anger, or frustration or sympathy shown when dealing with so many mood changes of her girls. Placid and unruffled, yes; but I think I was expecting more. However, the director may have had other ideas?

DAISY MEREDITH - SARAH COUZENS. A superb performance, and so convincing. Facial expressions, diction, body posture, gave a true feel of a young impressionable schoolgirl. I thoroughly enjoyed this performance by this confident actress.

SYBIL BURLINGTON - RACHEL COWARD; MONICA SMITHERS - AMANDA LINSTED worked well together as the 'snobs', in complete contrast to Daisy and Trixie. Well done to the two of you.

BELINDA MATHIESON - MARY MOUNTFORD-LISTER, in charge of year 4 girls. Very convincing.

CLARE BEAUMONT - CAROLYN TAYLOR. A thoughtful performance, showing her responsibilities within the school as Head Girl, and what Grangewood meant to her and her family, also her care for the younger pupils lower down the school. Well done.

TRIXIE MARTIN - JOAN LEE, Daisy's best friend. I enjoyed this performance. This lovely, friendly schoolgirl, a fun and amusing portrayal, with such sincerity. The face, and posture so well done, to give us a sensitive and sympathetic character.

ALICE FITZPATRICK - LOIS WELLS; gave full support as the hockey vice-captain.

MISS GRANVILLE - JULIANA CLEAL. A lovely statuesque character, gave an air of sophistication as the teacher of a quality girls school. Beautifully gowned and a most pleasant singing voice in the solo of 'The Grangewood School Song'. Well done.

MR. SCOBLOWSKI - PETER WEBSTER: he was not in the same class as a teacher as Miss Granville. Diction was fine, but he did not seem very sure of his character. I felt that as a music teacher, he had very little feeling for the music, or conducting the girls in their singing. They were left to their own devices. I'm sure the parents would not have been pleased with his performance, especially as they had to pay the school fees!!

DORA JOHNSTON - RACHEL KENNEDY; WINNIE IRVING - CAROL THOMPSON, both fitted in well as minor principals, and did all that was asked of them.

MADEMOISELLE - LUCY WALDEN. Lovely cameo character. Well dressed and a superb French accent.

MATRON - JOYCE HARRISON; in keeping with the character, however, as she walked through the audience for the opening of the play, sadly it showed up the 'crumpled' white head dress, I feel that matrons usually give a stiff and starchy appearance all over!!

MR. THOMPSON - NICK COARD. For me, there seemed little bond between father and daughter (Daisy) on finding her. I expected to see some warmth shown towards his daughter. It appeared a case of - I have some lines to say, so I must deliver them with clarity. No emotion was evident in the character.

All girls worked as a well rehearsed 'team' who truly did convince the audience of impressionable schoolgirls of the 1920's, when class and ladies were very important.

All ages were equalled out, and not once did I feel any character was other than well chosen and portrayed.

The hockey team commentary at the finals, and the rescue team on the cliff face will stay in my memory for some considerable time.

Thank you for the evening's entertainment, and for providing the audience with better quality seating.

Finally, congratulations to the Society for being awarded the 'Ron Kench Shield' for Drama, at the London Area Awards last June. I hope now that you have received it, with the certificate, that you will display it with pride at your forthcoming productions. There were 14 other nominations for the award. Well done.