

NODA Review

LEGALLY BLONDE

Performed by NOMADS (Newmarket)

Kings Theatre, Newmarket

Director Elliott Papworth

Musical Director Nicholas Sheehan

Choreographer Jodie Corbett.

Music & Lyrics Laurence O'Keefe & Nell Benjamin Books by Heather Hatch

Based on the novel by Amanda Brown and the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer motion picture the film's transfer to the stage works reasonably well. The plot is minimal: an apparently dumb blonde gets herself an education so that she can follow the boyfriend (who dumped her) to law school in order to win him back. Along the way she encounters sexism and discrimination but overcomes it all with her intelligence, confidence in herself and her pink outfits and eventually finds true love.

The songs, with a couple of exceptions, are not terribly memorable and vocal abilities varied but Musical Director Nicholas Sheehan had worked the cast well and Choreographer Jodie Corbett devised some splendid choreography which the cast executed with talent and inexhaustible energy.

The principals were well cast in their roles. Faye Dower as the irrepressible Elle Woods, certainly looked the part and her effervescent performance was great.

In an especially enjoyable performance Liam Corbett portrayed Emmett Forrest, Elle's only ally in the law school whom she eventually realises she loves.

Full marks to Joanna Turvey who stepped into the role as Elle's hairdresser friend and confidante, Paulette when the original actress was taken ill. Her solo "Ireland" was well sung. I don't know how much notice she had to cover the role but she has a sense of comic timing which was put to good use in her scenes with UPS man Kyle played by Ash Miller who performed a neat Riverdance.

This musical has, of course, a large cast so please forgive me for not mentioning them all. Suffice to say that other principal members of the cast performed their singing, acting and dancing with great enthusiasm. I must single out though Holly Wright for her portrayal of Vivienne, Elle's bitchy and snobbish rival in love, also Zak Wymer as Warner whose voice I would be happy to listen to any day and Charlie May Wallis for her somewhat brief but very good appearances as Brooke. There were also many other smaller roles essential to the story line which were very well interpreted. Of course I have to mention Elle's dog Bruiser played by Chase and Paulette's Rufus played by Kyla. There is nothing like cute animals to give a show the "Aww" factor.

The leads were given tremendous support by a young and hugely lively chorus. Their energy, enthusiasm and enjoyment in their ensemble numbers was exhausting to watch! Could I understand all the words in the songs which obviously 'progressed the story'?... no, but practically every modern production I see from *Legally Blonde*, *Hairspray*, *Sister Act* and others, all suffer from some lack of clear projection. Loud volume doesn't necessarily equate with understandable diction. Sometimes too, however good an orchestra is (and this orchestra was very good), there is always the danger of it overpowering the cast.

Technically the production had its first night problems. Throughout the first act body mics kept dropping out. Frantic work to sort the problem during the interval happily improved things somewhat as the second act was acceptedly audible although singers were still sometimes overwhelmed by the orchestra. The staging was minimal props and furniture brought on as necessary. The costumes were very good and lighting design first rate.

Well done to Director Elliott Papworth and his Production Team. Transferring modern musicals from film to stage obviously creates a big following and this was borne out by a week of sold out performances of this particular production of *Legally Blonde*. Thank you very much for inviting me along.

Julie Petrucci

Regional Representative NODA East District Four South