

**NODA Review -  
NKT Summer School – The Addams Family – August 2018  
DeeDee Doke**

**Da da da DAH – finger snap, finger snap – da da da DAH – finger snap, finger snap... any guess as to which musical that little intro belongs to?**

Popular culture's most appealing collection of ghouls, the Addams family, are the stars of a silly but clever musical that's proved a real hit on the UK community theatre circuit with nary a full-blown West End production to date. But who needs the West End? A slick rendering recently staged in Newmarket by the NKT Summer School, part of the NOMADS organisation, brought this madcap crop of characters to life – well, in relative terms given their 'undead' nature – for two hours of good-humoured entertainment.

The plot focuses on teenager Wednesday Addams's falling in love with a 'normal' teenage boy, Lucas Beineke. Wednesday invites Lucas's family to dinner with the deliriously weird Addams clan, consisting of mother Morticia, father Gomez, brother Pugsley, Uncle Fester, Grandma, and butler Lurch. This 'meet the parents' get-together at the Addamses' creepy Central Park mansion is set for disaster.

Based on characters created by cartoonist Charles Addams, *The Addams Family* is a novelty show that can give a creative team a great chance to go wild with the trappings of a deliriously weird environment and characters – extreme make-up, props, set. Happily in this production, directed by Andy Thorpe, the trappings were as weird as they needed to be, but the bulk of time and energy was clearly invested on pacing, characterisation, musical performance and effective use of the ensemble. Great choice/s!

In its Broadway incarnation, *The Addams Family* gave stellar stage talents such as Nathan Lane and Bebe Neuwirth opportunities to shine, and in the hands of the right performers, as Lane and Neuwirth demonstrated, the roles of the Addams Family members in particular can turn into tours des forces.

In Newmarket's production, Jake Overy's performance of Gomez was a pure comedic delight – a would-be matinee hero in his clumsily romantic appeals to wife Morticia, nervously bombastic in his attempts to be a charming host, and torn between his duties to daughter Wednesday and to wife Morticia. Overy beautifully navigated the nuances, making Gomez both suave and teeth-clenchingly embarrassing, and he delivered his songs in fine voice with gusto and aplomb.

Joseph Beach gave a new dimension to the jovially sinister Uncle Fester we've come to know and love on the 1960s cult TV Addams series. Beach injected a feral, suggestive gleefulness into the role of Gomez's brother, making this usually benign character more dangerous and unpredictable – a highly sophisticated and show-stopping performance.

As the elegant Addams matriarch Morticia, Rhiannon McBean captured the character's fragrant mystique and sang well, while Dresden Goodwin belted out the morbid Wednesday's numbers with the ferocity and perfect aim you'd expect of a girl who shoots to kill with the bow and arrow she totes around with her. Jack Hadley provided a suitably wild-eyed foil for Wednesday as the younger brother who loves to be tortured by her in the family electric chair.

As the mother of Wednesday's love interest, Erin Mann brought a goofy sweetness and a big, gorgeous voice to the dinner party, in sharp contrast to the Marcus Porter's portrayal of the Frankenstein-like butler Lurch's deadpan demeanour and grunts and groans.

Rounding out the cast were Yanna Stavrakakis as Grandma, Alex Matthews as Wednesday's boyfriend Lucas and Justin Glenister as his father Mal.

Thorpe's direction was sharp and pacey, with Jess Clifford's choreography suiting both the show's ebullient mood and the abilities of its performers. How fab to see an ensemble so focused and so in sync, hitting all the notes under the musical direction of Joseph Hall and not missing a dance step.

While the show's costumes were uniformly fine, the costumes for the ensemble – or Ancestors, as they're called in the show – were especially effective, gauzy, at the right length to easily allow movement, and period-appropriate.

What a fun afternoon with *The Addams Family* – with a super troupe and creative team spinning an entertaining show into a really, really entertaining show!