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Production: **The Boy Friend**
Company: Molesey Musical Theatre
Venue: Vera Fletcher Hall, Thames Ditton
Date of Review: Friday 6 June 2008

The Boy Friend, set in the carefree world of the French Riviera in the Roaring 1920s, is a popular amateur show - but you selected a timely opportunity to produce it given the lack of other productions in the region recently.

It can easily be portrayed as dated (as indeed it is) and the three acts can drag - but there was no danger with this production which was vibrant, colourful and energetic right from the start. Movement under the command of choreographer Geninne Menzies was especially well presented - proving very effective without over-complication.

Sadie Reed got proceedings underway as Hortense, the French maid. She made a good attempt at the French accent - but needed a little more volume in places.

The set and costumes looked splendid as we were introduced to the girls in Perfect Young Ladies which was performed well. As they had just returned from the tennis courts I wonder whether a couple should have been in tennis costume perhaps with a couple of rackets.

The title song was bright, sang at a breezy pace and again was matched with excellent choreography.

Maisie (Polly Horne) and Bobby Van Husen (Steve Nottage) gave an excellent rendition of Won't You Charleston With Me ? with strong singing and movement on display from them both. Steve also produced a confident American accent.

The next duet featured Madame Dubonnet (Lesley Young) and Percival Browne (Iain Cannell) which was sweetly done but felt could have benefited from a little more pace and there was scope for Madame Dubbonnet to be a little more extrovert. There were some minor difficulties with some of the vocals here.

Karen Young gave a charming performance as Polly Browne - making her character very believable combining all the attributes of shyness, excitement and naivety. She sang well too during I Could Be Be Happy With You. Her love interest was Tony played by Dan Lispcombe who worked hard but I struggled to get a feeling of any real chemistry between the leading couple. There were a couple of points where Karen over-talked the applause which detracted a little from the flow of the dialogue.

Act 2 opened up with another great looking set and a lovely picture as the curtains opened on a colourful rendition of Sur La Plage. Just a minor point, I think the balls would possibly have been thrown a little more daintily - at one stage it was like a practice session for the Olympic Volleyball competition !

Nicer In Nice was a good company number - and there were excellent interactions between

Iain and Alan who worked well together.

The You-Don't-Want-To-Play-With-Me-Blues was well put across by Iain and Lesley.

Safety In Numbers featured some strong singing from Polly Horne as Maisie.

The same sea backdrop was used for the final act in which the costumes looked terrific and there were some nice lighting effects around the trellis. I wasn't sure why another backdrop wasn't used but it seemed to work nonetheless.

The Riviera was a real highlight and well performed.

The spotlight seemed delayed in picking up Alan Young (Lord Brockhurst) and Geninne Menzies (Dulcie) but the pair produced a lively rendition of It's Never Too Late To Fall In Love that thoroughly entertained the audience. Alan made an excellent Lord Brockhurst and really made the most of the comedy in the part - well done.

Gloria Smith made a suitably haughty Lady Brockhurst and contrasted very well with Lord Brockhurst who was most definitely 'under the thumb'.

Polly and Steve again combined well for a lively Carnival Tango. There were just a few moments where I felt that, as strong as Polly's performance was, there were just some points where it strayed into the realms of being over-played and then became slightly out of context with the piece.

The performance ended on a high with a lively finale that again was well choreographed. As the curtain was closing several performers started to move which just spoilt a little the picture of the final freeze.

There were some excellent supporting performances from the ensemble all of who worked hard and contributed significantly to the success of the performance.

In all a very enjoyable performance - that was held together well by director Gloria Smith. It flowed a good pace and there was plenty of energy from the performers that kept the audience enthralled throughout.

Music under the leadership of musical director Elizabeth Cooper was well played and the balance of sound between band and performers - spot on.

The programme was nicely produced with all the requisite information - and again a special mention to all the hard work on wardrobe from Joan Flanagan that was very effective.

Thanks for the invitation and the kind hospitality shown on the evening. Good luck with your next compilation show which I look forward to seeing next year.

Best Wishes

David Stewart
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