

Forbidden Planet NODA Review

Contributed by Dean Beedell (webmaster)

NATIONAL OPERATIC AND DRAMATIC ASSOCIATION LONDON REGION

Society ; Henley Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society

Production ; "RETURN TO THE FORBIDDEN PLANET"

Date ; Wednesday 18th November 2009

Venue ; Kenton Theatre, Henley-on-Thames

Report by ; Henry Hawes - NODA Representative - Area 13

I was pleased to be invited to review H.A.O.D.S latest production "Return to the Forbidden Planet" at the Kenton Theatre on Wednesday 18th November 2009. I have always enjoyed this show ever since its release for amateur performances. It is a wonderful sci-fi spoof very loosely based on Shakespear's 'The Tempest'. It contains some classic tunes from the 1950's and great audience participation. This production had been well staged and cast and contained all the facets one has come to expect from this show but where was the audience which appeared very sparse on the night of my visit leaving the audience participation a little flat.

Crew of the Intergalactic Starship, ALBATROSS

Joshua Young - (CAPTAIN TEMPEST) - This was a good stylised characterisation by Joshua, his posing being being right in every detail. Here we had a performer who knew how to play an audience, so essential in this role. Diction was good and his singing voice came across very well, and his use of his prop 'the pipe' was well controlled. I was also impressed with his rapport with 'Miranda', very tongue in cheek - Well done.

Johnpaul Maillard - (COOKIE) - Johnpaul grasped this part and made it his own. He got the characterisation just right showing well his feelings towards 'Miranda' and his pain at being rejected by her. His singing voice showed quality, doing full justice to the musical numbers he was involed in - A well presented role.

Claire Wallis - (SCIENCE OFFICER) - As the strong willed 'Science Officer', Claire was excellent. She presented the character exactly right with good acting, first class diction and a pleasant singing voice.

Phil Couch - (BOSUN) - Phil presented what one would envisage a Bosun on a 'Starship' to be, presenting just the right commanding presence. Vocally he presented a good singing voice with good intonation and diction and which blended well with 'Cookie's' - A good characterisation.

Sarah Calderbank - (NAVIGATION OFFICER, CHASTITY GONE) - This was another characterisation I could not fault, all the elements of the role were well displayed with good reactions when steering the 'Starship' through the asteroid shower. Good diction and facial expressions..

Damage Control Crew

Rowena McMenamain - (CUTIE CULL)

Fanny Abelsson - (AXEL DENT)

Ellie Jefferies - (ANDY SCEPTIC)

Nicoletta Hartin - (MYKE ROCHIP)

Michelle Jewell - (TANYA HYDE)

Daisy O'Halloran - (WANDA BRAR)

Rachel Dixon - (LOU BRICCANT)

Samantha Dixon - (JUSTINE KASE) - I have combined members of the 'Damage Control Crew' together. Each and every member of this group played their individual characters to perfection with enormous enthusiasm. Movement about the stage area was well controlled. Singing was of a good standard with diction and control and a good blend of voices. I was also impressed with the dancing of the many choreographic routines which were slick and precise. This group generated a joy of performing, this, combined with a good rapport with the audience both before and during the performance ensured that everybody was involved in the audience participation - Well done.

Denizen's of D-Illyra

Peter Ashton - (DOCTOR PROSPERO) - Peter made a good 'Doctor Prospero', the mad scientist, although perhaps a little more evilness would have enhanced the character. Diction was clear with good projection so that every word could be heard. Lines were well pointed which brought out the Shakesperian quality of the libretto.

Lucy Potter - (MIRANDA) - This young lady was exactly right for this part with a good stage presence. Her diction was good and she had an attractive singing voice. Her movements about the stage area was a joy to watch and particularly her rapport with 'Captain Tempest' - Well done.

Karen Hemingway - (ARIEL, THE ROBOT) - I have seen many styles of this character which ranged from Roller skating robots to Androids, but this was, what I consider to be, the quintessential 'Robot'. Karen presented a first class 'Robot' with a stilted movement in both arms and legs which she maintained throughout the performance - Congratulations.

Roddy Grey - (MONSTER OF THE ID) - This is another character of which I have seen many and various interpretations so it was good to see the 'Monster' on stage instead of tentacles groping through the ships portholes - Well done.

Ian Beyts - (NEWSREADER) - This was a most enjoyable 'Churchilian' performance by Ian complete with cigar and a glass of whatever tittle he fancied. His line delivery was spot-on, no easy task when speaking to a video camera - Congratulations.

Michael Huntington - (DIRECTOR) - The show had been well cast and all the right characterisations had been brought out. It appeared well rehearsed and staged and it was obvious the cast thoroughly enjoyed performing. Diction, projection, movement was all first-class. You must have been proud of your cast Michael and the end result.

Ian Head - (MUSICAL DIRECTOR) - Ian had gathered round him some excellent musicians. This group had just the right balance for the musical numbers in this show, and being placed underneath the bridge of the 'Starship' seemed to achieve just the right balance between instrument and vocal. All the principals and chorus members had been well rehearsed in the music with a good balance of voices and did full justice to the 'pop' tunes of the period. I feel I must mention the Guitar solo by Ben. which was outstanding, normally this solo spot is played with a saxophone so it was good to see a different instrument used which I think worked better - Congratulations.

Sally-Anne Coleman - (CHOREOGRAPHER) - Choreographically this show was well served with Sally-Anne's routines, of which there were many. They had all obviously been well rehearsed with precise arm and leg movements and with such a bevy of attractive young ladies dancing the routines, certainly livened up the proceedings. - Well done.

Stage Manager & Crew - Overall this appeared a well managed stage throughout the performance with no visible hitches.

Set Design & Construction - I was impressed with the set design, it was simplistic but effective and had obviously been well constructed. It also allowed the musicians out of the Kenton's claustrophobic pit and allowed them to play actually on stage, being positioned underneath the bridge of the 'Starship', which on this occasion seemed to work very well allowing a good balance of voices and instruments.

Lighting Design & Operation - The lighting had been well designed which ensured the right atmosphere was generated on stage, particularly when flying through the asteroid belt. Control was good with no late cues being visible.

Sound Design & Operation - A good sound plot which was well balanced and controlled without any distortion. The operation was also well controlled with well picked up cues.

Audio Visual Design - This was a well positioned screen so that it could be seen by all the audience, but there did appear to be a malfunction on the night of my visit with a band running through the picture from top to bottom which was slightly distracting.

Properties - All properties used looked authentic and related well to the plot.

Costumes - This was a good set of costumes which indicated well the difference between the various ranks and I am sure the female crews mini-dresses and hot pants raised the temperature among certain members of the audience!

Make-up & Hair Styles - The make-up appeared to have been applied correctly so that it stood up well under the stage lights. Hair styles suited the futuristic characters of the 'Starship Albatross' .

Programme - A neat programme of the right size. It had an eye-catching cover and contained many items of interest together with interesting cast biographies, all printed on good quality paper. I did feel however that the cast names were printed on the small side making it difficult to read in subdued light

Front of House - As usual with this society, excellent Front of House staff, smart, friendly and welcoming to their audience

Thank you for your invitation for me to review this show and your excellent hospitality. This was a good production which would have been helped with a larger audience to take part in the audience participation, and which always raises this type of show, but finding an audience these days is not easy. May I wish you all success with your next production "The Boy Friend".

Henry Hawes - NODA Representative - Area 13