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## **CODS**

### **Fiddler on The Roof**

**Queen's Hall Theatre, Cranbrook**

**Director: Heather Barnes**

**Musical Director: Peter Bettley**

**Choreography: Heather Barnes/Victoria King**

**Friday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

For the CODS 99<sup>th</sup> Season this choice was an all-round family musical full of characters with a haunting violin solo trickling through and began with a strong vocal 'Tradition'. Based on Sholem Aleichem stories, the scene is set in the small Russian village of Anatevka in 1905, where Tevye, a poor milkman often in conversation with God, resides with his longsuffering wife Golde and their five daughters. Yente is a widow with a purpose – she's the local matchmaker – it's her business to find suitable husbands, but after the arrival of Perchik, a student with modern ideas, traditions are being unsettled! The three eldest girls start breaking the rules by not following family customs and faith by wishing to marry for love! This musical is dark, tragic with persecution of Jews by being driven from their villages and is still poignant. However, Tevye always has a twinkle, and there is much humour running through his script.

A sturdy tile roofed house was constructed by the team headed by Maurice Wilkins which was hinged to show the interior. It had a chimney stack, a front door and a small panned window. I was only sorry I couldn't see the top half of the fiddler. The interior was simply furnished, had a stove in the corner and the window was dressed in tie back net curtains. There was an assortment of household goods, laundry baskets, brooms, churns etc. The large table was mobile using two square boxes as supports and a plank across. Most effective, easily moved by the cast and dressed as required – a large lace tablecloth and candlesticks for the Sabbath prayer – wedding gift table and so forth. The dream sequence worked well with the bed front centre with Tevye and Golde sitting in their night attire, with a cover pulled up – yes effective. The inn was simply small tables and stools. The milk cart and various other trucks worked well. The raised station sign of Anatevka, a bench, father and daughter in overcoats, but no gloves – Hodel with a suitcase and puffs of dry ice showed us she was leaving on a train. A good corner area for Motels tailor's shop and great excitement for the 'new arrival' – that of the grand treadle sewing machine.

A joint fresh approach from Heather and Victoria King with Monique Syred dance captain, with synchronised symbolic movement throughout. I particularly enjoyed the zombie section from the ensemble in the dream sequence, with long dead Grandma Tzeitel and giant sized Fruma-Sarah.

The lighting plot gave Elly Hills and her team the opportunity to use her favourite colour and there were many attractive effects brought to the stage. Penny Tobin once again dual rolling – she used her skills on the sound desk plus keeping charge of the radio mikes. She designed character faces and prepared make-up packs, together with making beards although I did see some beautifully grown ones, with Kate Parks assisting backstage. Ghosts were particularly

well made up. Rita Wilkins and Sharon Pickles once again came up with some excellent outfits, the peasant look with the headscarves – aprons etc. The Jewish finishes with tzitzis and yarmulkes, wedding finery, a smart Constable, boots, a lot of hats, etc.

Musically it was a pleasure, the orchestra led by MD Peter Bettley on keyboard was perfectly balanced with the vocals well delivered. Ensemble singing was clear and strong. Sololists came across with confidence and feeling. Robin Harrison was a natural Tevye he had humour and passion, was very agile and his expressive conversations were superb. He was most ably supported by Kathy Gibbs as his wife Golde – a lovely duet ‘Do I love You’ and delightful five daughters each with their individual characteristics, with gentlemen creating convincing characters. Gillian Davis portrayed Yente with stature and clarity – she also had some great timed comedy coming through. I cannot name you all individually, but this was obviously a well-cast, strong team effort throughout the performance guided by Heather with her expertise, backed by a huge unseen work force.

A precis will appear on the NODA website for you to view shortly.

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