



Be inspired by amateur theatre

‘Priscilla Queen of the Desert’ the Musical
Queen’s Hall Theatre, Cranbrook
Friday 28th October 2022
Director: Annie Hatcher
Musical Director: Ian Harby
Choreographer: Chrissie Smith

A first for me! Annie took on a huge undertaking pulling the stops out and everyone working their socks off, the audience showing their appreciation with much enthusiasm. A flamboyant jukebox singalong, dance along musical penned by Elliot and Scott in 2006 with a rush of top pop songs throughout. Set in Sydney Australia and following the journey of two drag queens and a trans woman to play Alice Springs Casino. To get there we follow their long journey in Priscilla – a pretty battered lilac bus and experience encounters sometimes unpleasant reactions, along the way – the theme throughout really is of ‘acceptance.’ Much innuendo with quite vivid language at times. In the opening at the Cockatoo Club Hoop Artist Elly Hills showed us an aerial hoop routine in high heels a skill she acquired from Simia Circus, a little different from her normal appearances on stage with the ensemble.

The Desert Band of eight musicians led by Ian Harby played nonstop well-known songs from Tina Turner, Donna Summer to Cyndi Lauper – including a good rendition of ‘Thank God I’m a Country Boy’ line dancing to match, from an enthusiastic Max Chesters’s, lively ‘Go West’ ‘Hot Stuff’ and a particularly good version of ‘A Fine Romance’ performed by Louise Franklin and amazed with her ‘top half’ movements as Shirley a great cameo. A lot of ensemble numbers kept the cast busy with constant movement and costume changes with Sharon Pickles at the helm of the complex plot.

The three leading characters gelled and interacted well. Although I felt a stronger Australian accent was required, Steve Bowen as Tick/Mitzi had a delightful moment with his reconnection to his young son Benji who was rather surprisingly played by an endearing young lady Jemima Syred for this performance. I am sure Thursday/Sat evenings Benji played by Harry Coltart would also have also brought a tear to the eye duetting with his father, Tick.

David Richardson as Bernadette captured her sarcasm beautifully, walked and stood elegantly whilst Alistair McGowen created a wonderfully camp Adam/Felicia living the life and notable clad in silver glamour performing from the top of the bus, lip-synching a superb aria.

Bob a character to love was John Wright spirited away from wife Cynthia – Mims Dawson-Reilly who was adept at ping-pong balls – most amusing. The three Divas, Megan Grebbell, Charlotte Fillmore and Alison Withey-Harrison closely harmonised with like hand movements well throughout and appeared in some colourful glam sexy costumes.

A minimal stage was set for the numerous scenes with stage extensions right and left for cameo scenes. The use of simple blackdrop and small scenery pieces worked pretty well although I wasn't always sure exactly where I was – lost in the desert! Priscilla herself, set at the rear of the stage showing inside her lower deck and driver's cabin, was panelled, and turned to remove homophobic graffiti and this was stage managed well by the team. The lighting effects from the team shone and sparkled throughout and the cast and audience certainly enjoyed themselves.

A full, colourful A4 programme had been produced by Annie and the media publicity was very good too.

Thank you Rita and Maurice for your hospitality – I was also lucky with the raffle on this occasion and I do hope Saturday ran well with more full houses.

A shortened report will be available on the NODA SE website very shortly.

Anne Lawson
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