

NODA REPORT

WITHAM A.O.S. - ORPHEUS IN THE UNDERWORLD Public Hall Witham

I have to confess that Orpheus is something of a favourite for me, both for its music and its outrageous burlesque of classical mythology. To be properly enjoyed it has to be sung well and it has to be FUN, and Witham's production succeeded on both of these counts, making the fun element very obvious, very early. Chorus work made a good contribution to the comedy and was well disciplined, both in music and the fairly limited movement set. All the soloists had the measure of their songs, though I did feel that 'I was a King' was taken too fast to be the compelling number it should be.

The production kept up a good pace, apart from a distinctly dead period (excuse the pun) immediately following The Hades Chorus, and the dancers excelled themselves with The Galop.

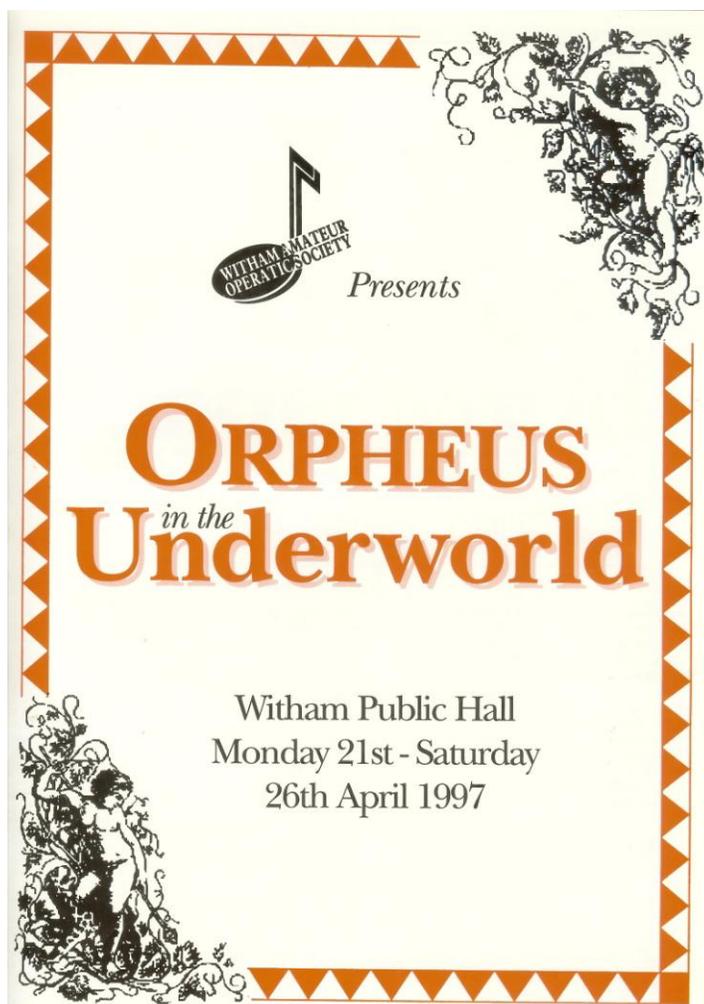
A well balanced cast made the family of the Gods into an interesting set of characters, who squabbled with gusto as the opportunity arose. Too many to mention individually, all deserve praise, but Peter McKay's Vulcan was a gem. An object lesson in what can be done with a minor part!

This was a well staged production directed by Edwina McKay, with some nice touches, like the hand puppet snake in the opening, Diana's black leather gear for stag (night) hunting, Mercury on skates through the audience, and the use of the ante room for the Fly Duet, rather than being confined by the Bathroom. Good sets, well dressed, appropriate lighting, but oh dear what a noise was made by the smoke machine. Makes you wish for the days of frozen Carbon Dioxide!

John James directed a 16 piece orchestra, keeping a tight rein on events, and without an array of sound equipment all the soloists and chorus could be adequately heard. It can be done!

As ever the show was not a sell out, yet, as ever, the audience was not Sorry it Came.

Well done all concerned for a thoroughly enjoyable evening.



BWT Report

Sparkling visit to the Underworld

A SPARKLING Champagne production of Orpheus in the Underworld was presented by Witham Amateur Operatic Society at the Public Hall last week. With 15 solo parts, it says a lot for the strength and depth of the society that there were no weaknesses and the chorus only drew lightly on the workshop.

Valerie Ditchman was a delightful sounding Eurydice. Paul Chittleborough's Orpheus gave her good reason to fall for the devilish charms of Pluto, Howard Brooks, despite the dreadful puns that he was given to deliver.

Jan Wash as Orpheus's mum brought an operatic quality and clarity of delivery. As usual, she was a real presence on stage. Marea Irving as Cupid was a delight, a bubbly young Barbara Windsor. Sandra Moorhouse was a majestic Juno and Sue Siddalls a confident punk Diana.

The music in operetta is often incidental but here John James, the musical director, ensured that it was an integral part of the production. Eddie McKay, the producer, kept the show flowing in a light and polished manner, while Lavinia Farmer, the choreographer, maintained her usual high standard. The scenery, especially in Act III, was visually luxurious.

Nicholas Clough was a stage dominant Jupiter and his singing was matched by Graham Jones as Styx. Michael Dunion, fresh from his triumphs at Wickham Bishops, was Mercury, racing through the auditorium and on to stage on his roller blades.

It was a sophisticated pantomime with a high standard of singing and acting, responding to the quality of Offenbach's music and Phil Park's witty translation enjoyed by a large audience.

James Bright

Characters

Eurydice	wife of Orpheus	Valerie Ditchman
Calliope	Muse of Epic Poetry, & Orpheus' mum	Janet Wash
Cupid	god of love	Marea Irving
Venus	goddess of beauty, otherwise 'armless	Helene Jones
Diana	goddess of hunting and stag nights	Sue Siddalls
Juno	Mrs Jupiter	Sandra Moorhouse
Orpheus	professor of music	Paul Chittleborough
Pluto	King of Hades (and Aristaeus)	Howard Brooks
Jupiter	King of the gods	Nicholas Clough
Mars	god of war	Tom Whelan
Mercury	messenger of the gods	Michael Dunion
Bacchus	god of wine bars	Jonathan Baron
Vulcan	god of fire, and Mr Venus	Peter McKay
Styx	servant of Pluto	Grahame Jones
Icarus	balloon pilot	Stewart Adkins

Nymphs, Shepherds, Gods, Goddesses, Attendants, Revellers, Pupils, etc.

Kathryn Adkins, Jonathan Baron, Caron Bradbury, Pat Briggs, Muriel Chambers, Rosemary Chaplin, William Chaplin, Tim Clarke, Julie Edwards, Alf Farmer, Helen Fox, Natalie Hawkes, Judy Henderson, Richard Herring, Grahame Borthwick Jones, Peter McKay, Anne Marsden, Dave Morgan, Patsy Page, Julia Reed, Joyce Ryder, Ann Sheppard, Tim Sheppard, Edna Starling, Bobbie Tyler, Tom Whelan, Darren White, Anne Wilson, Sarah Wilson.

Dancers

Kathryn Adkins, Caron Bradbury, Anne Dobinson, Natalie Hawkes, Elisabeth Ladd, Sue Rogers