

BWT Report

How to Succeed In Business without Really Trying

Witham Amateur Operatic Society

Witham Public Hall

"HOW to succeed in Business (or anything else) without really trying" is a phrase that has now entered the language, but it is rarely used accurately. For J Pierrepont Finch, the hero of this musical, really is trying. In fact he's trying very hard. Finch wheedles his way up the ladder at World Wide Wickets by keeping ahead of the game. He makes sure the company president finds him in the office first thing in the morning, surrounded by empty coffee cups, as though he has spent all night working. He treats his on-and-off girlfriend appallingly, treads all over his colleagues and eventually even wins over the chairman by alleging that they have a common bond as former window washers.

Yet in Stuart Scott Brown's portrayal, it is difficult not to warm to Finch. He is cheeky rather than criminal, a rascal not a villain. Scott Brown is superb: In a performance that would stand comparison with the Broadway original, he dominates the stage. He sings well, his timing is excellent and he is nimble on his feet.

He is backed by a strong cast, staging and choreography. Stewart Adkins plays the company president as a kind of American version of CJ, Reggie Perrin's boss, while Elisabeth Ladd shows strength of character in the role of Rosemary.

Kathryn Adkins is at her seductive best as the president's bit on the side, while Tim Clarke comes close to stealing the show as the boss's simpering nephew.

There are strong cameos from Tom Whelan as the chairman and Danny Mullane as the short-lived advertising manager, plus strong singing turns from Sandra Moorhouse as Smitty and Pat Briggs, the secretary who takes centre stage in the finale.

Director Cynthia Stead has put together some neat choreography and competently handles the challenge of organising up to 25 people on stage simultaneously. Musical director Susan Malam produces some original touches in the orchestra pit.

Ron Fosker