

NODA REPORT

WITHAM A.O.S. - THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE

Having taken part in and also seen a few productions of the Broadway version of Pirates, it was a pleasant experience to revisit the original style, with its much gentler orchestration, and less raucous approach!

Directed by Cynthia Stead the production moved smoothly through the machinations of the plot at a reasonable pace, and produced much in the way of humour. Good quality sets and costumes made for some interesting stage pictures, though there was the occasional tendency to rather static semi-circles and straight lines. The pleasant sounds from MD John James' sixteen piece orchestra allowed us to hear nearly everything from the stage, though there were one or two instances of disagreement in timing between stage and pit. Nevertheless, the overall quality of singing was good, and the chorus came over well, not least in the unaccompanied Hail Poetry.

Nicholas Clough gave us what became an imposing and likeable Pirate King. Lydia Clough grew into her role of the faithful and (mostly) compliant maid of all work, Ruth. Steve Draper got plenty of fun out of his Sergeant of Police. Val Ditchman was in fine voice as Mabel. Michael Dunion was a rather low key and subdued Samuel. Patrick O'Brien had a great time, as did we all, with the Major General. Nicholas Ladd was the right age for Frederic, and was in good voice, but looked uncomfortable in the role.

This was what I would call a genteel Pirates, and though it lacked a little in necessary energy in some scenes, notably the Policeman/Pirate fracas, it was a real pleasure to be able take in the music and the words at a reasonable pace. The audience certainly enjoyed it. And what good houses too!

John Warburton