

WITHAM A.O.S. - ANYTHING GOES - 26TH APRIL 1996  
DRAFT REPORT FOR THE AUGUST 1996 BULLETIN

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Notice Board

WITHAM A.O.S. - ANYTHING GOES  
Public Hall, Witham.

This production of Anything Goes used the 1987 'Beaumont' revision, which omits, amongst others, 'Heaven Hop' (not in the original anyway), and 'Be Like the Bluebird'. However it re-instates a couple of original numbers excluded from the first Broadway showing in 1934. Having now seen both versions currently available to Amateurs, I found myself much more at ease with this later one, even though there is less chorus work. The opening in particular introduces the audience to forthcoming events in a much less frenetic way than does the earlier version, and the whole pace of the Act benefits. Cynthia Stead's production adopted a fairly low energy approach as far as the Chorus was concerned, using little more than the four Angels and two sailors for dance or expansive movement, and 'Blow Gabriel' in particular did not seem to develop the required energy. But the simple tap sequence by the whole ensemble for the Act I finale 'Anything Goes' was very good indeed. A model example of 'keep it simple get it right'! Chorus singing was good and audible despite a sometimes over-loud brass section in Brian Brown's otherwise well controlled orchestra.

From a well balanced cast, Pat McLeod gave us an enjoyable and vibrant characterisation of Reno; Sue Rogers was a rather stiff and restrained Hope; Erma as played by Kathryn Adkins was irresistible; David Holman's Crocker was suitably confused, though all the comedy did not emerge; the Stewart Adkins silly ass version of Lord Evelyn was, perhaps, just a little over the top early on, and his 'Gypsy' in Act II was excellent; Michael Dunion's Moonshine was Public Enemy No.13 to a T! Pamela Adams, as Evangeline Harcourt was just right. The rest of the principals supported very well, and the whole production evidenced a good team spirit. Sound was reasonably well handled and scenery was up to the task, but lighting did not always appear appropriate to the set scene. Costume was fine, though I wasn't sure about the girls white ankle socks in 'Anything Goes'. Did nothing for their legs!

This was a most enjoyable show, rounded off with absolutely first class curtain call sequences, where each group and principal reminded us of a snippet of their contribution to the show. And what a joy to open the programme at the centre and find Scenes, Cast, Music and Credits all on one spread. Bliss!

Other Comments (for the Society only)

1. I know its impossible to equip all principals with radio mikes, but presumably you do maximise the use of those you have by sharing. For instance in the opening sequence it would have improved things greatly if the two at the table could have had mikes just for their opening of 'There's no Cure Like Travel', and thus matched the immediately preceding sound level of Reno. Likewise unmiked Eli Whitney's 'Crew Song' was all but lost, largely due to overweight brass. Was borrowing impossible for this?
2. I liked the opening of this version much better than that of the other offered by Musicscope, and you handled the build up of passengers really well. The use of ships rails at each side worked well, and I found this interesting because in another production which I saw, a similar placement came over as a barrier between stage and audience. The difference was that you used them positively, whilst the other production didn't.
3. Reference my low energy comment above there was also a distinct tendency to cease movement during the intro. music to solo/duet numbers. This always has the effect of slowing the pace, which then has to be regained.
4. Nick Clough was an imposing figure as Captain, with Chris Lowe's suitably subservient Purser. Ashley Saunders and Len Howard were excellent as Luke and

John, and its a pity they were not more in evidence, as I think they are in the other version.

5. 'Buddy Beware' came across very well indeed, with plenty of action.

6. Its not usually the case that I comment adversely on Brian Brown's orchestra, but on this occasion the brass did get away from him from time to time, and lyrics were not heard. A pity, because this really was an enjoyable production, and its always nice to hear everything that is written for the audience's delight.

7. I've always thought highly of your programmes, and this one makes an advance by going into A4 and putting all the info. the audince might need during the show on one spread. Super, but I'm afraid it's unlikely to get anywhere in a programme competition, due to the absence of the Rights Holder's credits. And no credit for the programme compiler either. Such modesty!

Well done everyone, and I look forward to the next.

John Warburton  
2nd May 1996

P.S.Re 'Desert Song' in your programme's excellent Dates for Your Diary, there seems to be confusion. You have the dates right for Clacton, but Springers accrediting production (which is later, I think). Clacton are presenting South Pacific!