

## Theatre Life Review 9 to 5

"9 to 5 – The Musical", Witham Amateur Operatic Society  
(by Guest Reviewer – Christine Davidson)

For October WAOS gave us the feel good production of 9 to 5. Written by Patricia Resnick with Music and Lyrics by Dolly Parton, this production opened with the famous 9 to 5 number to represent a bustling day at the office of Consolidated Industries. This had the nearly full house audience tapping their toes from the very start of the show. The production is based on the film in 1980 which starred Dolly Parton and Jane Fonda; it portrays three women who take on the horrendous and chauvinistic boss, Franklin Hart Jr, who ultimately gets his comeuppance.

Great wigs from the talented Patsy Page gave us the 70's feel and the costumes were fab. Scenes were set by painted stage cloths and a raised area was included upstage to complete the set, simple but effective. Although sometimes maybe just a few too many of the chorus were on stage especially during the first scene when some were squashed in the wings. The country and western songs were easy on the ears, accompanied by a fine, and well-honed orchestra ably conducted by the musical director James Tovey. He really did bring each of the songs to life even if some were somewhat unmemorable. A strong ensemble is vital for high-energy shows which have continuous movement, dancing and singing. This was certainly evident throughout this production. The show had good female leads, with strong acting and singing from all of them that really kept the show going. I truly loved the emotion and strength of character of each of these ladies, who showed that you can act in a musical and be believed.

Matilda Bourne as Judy whose husband had left her for a younger model; she had never worked in an office in her life. Moving from shy and awkward to a confident strong woman during the show her solos of 'Get out and stay out', with crystal clear voice and her 'Dance of Death' in her sexy black sequined dress were great fun.

Diana Easton as Violet, who wants to be more than an Office Supervisor, was confident, expressive, her timing was excellent. The lynch pin of the three ladies she commanded the stage and her strong acting abilities meant that she was very believable. Her rendition of 'One of the Boys', with the male ensemble, was impressive and the duet 'Let Love Grow' another charming number.

Sarah Miles as Doralee, the feisty Dolly Parton look alike, sung the country and western songs with great ease. Not only did Sarah look, and act, the part of a country girl but she sang beautifully and had a terrific Southern accent. Her songs 'Backwoods Barbie' solo and 'Cowgirl's Revenge' stood out. All three were really on top of their game in this production. The fantasy sequence where the three ladies imagine themselves either as a femme fatale, a rodeo star, or Snow White, was totally hilarious and executed with great pace and excellent choreography. I loved the puppets in this scene which added to the fun of it all.

An excellent Roz, the long suffering assistant to Franklin Hart Jr, was played with relish and great comedy timing by Rhianna Howard. Her song 'Heart to Hart' was a great number. Roz was besotted with the boss, the sexist, egotistical, lying, hypocritical bigot (quote from show) played with great effect by Niels Bradley. He gave us a villain that you loved to boo and hiss. He also had a nice line in John Travolta dancing as well as singing with power and the right amount of arrogance.

Emma Loring as the drunk at work had a very infectious giggle and was a pleasure to watch while Danni Carr, the accountant in love with Violet, had a wonderful voice and stage presence. I would love to see more from him in future productions.

Lighting was slightly disappointing. Low level lighting at front stage left and right, on occasions, meant that cast were lost in the gloom. On stage LED colour mixing could have been given greater thought, which was a shame, as this quality production deserved more. The projection of Dolly Parton was fun, seen on a video screen, at the back of the stage to welcome people to the performance but sometimes it was hard to hear what was being said. Occasionally sound balance was a problem, particularly when the orchestra were louder than the singers, causing a few songs to be difficult to hear but I think that this was a technical problem which should have been sorted out pre-show.

Hard working, confident director Nikki Mundell-Poole's production has some fine dancing, and the fantasy sequences work well. Great team work from the whole cast who showed from the very start just how much they were enjoying each of their roles.

An excellent feel good show that sent the audience out singing 9 to 5 as they left the theatre. Congratulations to all for a good night out.