

**REVIEW:****White Christmas****Witham Amateur Operatic Society**

Such was the enduring popularity of his song White Christmas that Irving Berlin wrote a whole show around it.

The song had originally appeared in the film Holiday Inn in 1942 and it was another 12 years before White Christmas the musical appeared, with original songs by Berlin and others he had already written shoehorned in to fit the plot.

All the familiar refrains bounced off the stage in Witham Amateur Operatic Society's lively and colourful production, which conveniently ignored the fact that it was October and that audiences exited to rain rather than snow.

It is not one of the best known, or indeed popular, of musicals but the society's reputation is such that more than 1,000 people attended its six evenings and one matinee.

And they would not have been disappointed. The singing was first class, the humour spot on and director Nikki Mundell-Poole's choreography delightful.

Much of it was in the hands of new or relatively new members of the cast.

The two buddies at the centre of the piece were played by Nick Skinner, in his debut for the society, and Paul Flynn, in only his second show.

Their strong voices and obvious rapport were the centrepiece alongside love interests played by Amy Marsh and Sarah Miles with assurance and twinkling personalities.

Twinkling is probably not a word to describe the character of Martha, described by Ethel Merman, she informs us, as 'loud'. And loud she was, thanks to Corrina Groombridge's commanding vocals.

It was almost a showstopping performance, but that honour was stolen by ten-year-old Olivia Reynolds, who most definitely twinkled, and impressed with her confidence and delivery.

But Berlin's songs were the main attraction, sprinkled liberally throughout the action, bookended by the title song – and three false finales.