

WITHAM AMATEUR OPERATIC SOCIETY

White Christmas

Director and Choreographer Nikki Mundell-Poole

Assistants to the Director Alice Mason and Emma Loring

Musical Director Gerald Hindes

Production Manager Michael Mundell-Poole

Performed at The Public Hall, Witham on Thursday 30th October 2025 at 7.30pm

I was warmly welcomed at Front of House by Donna Goddard and met with Director Nikki Mundell-Poole after the performance. The set was minimal and built by Cressing Temple Community Shed with the society and painted by society members. There were a number of moveable props and two reversible screens used as changing areas on stage. Two telephone exchanges were so realistic! Good use was made of the video screen to denote scene changes including the Western Front of WW2, the Barn Theatre and the Inn. A very realistic snowy scene was screened. The train car, aided by the video screen really appeared to be moving through the countryside. Very effective and well done! Sound throughout was impressive with good projection and all the cast being heard clearly. Clever use of lighting enhanced the scenes.

Costumes throughout were superb with stunning colour combinations and a lot of thought had obviously gone into the choices made.

The twelve piece band, with Musical Director and Conductor Gerald Hindes was well balanced and a joy to listen to. The overture set the scene brilliantly and expert musical direction enabled the cast to confidently perform this memorable music.

I must congratulate the excellent choreography by Nikki Mundell-Poole assisted by two dance captains.. The routines were impressive and fast including tap dancing and some quite intricate movements involving the dancers. All the cast were dancing well including the ensemble with some spectacular set pieces and tableaux.

All the cast performed confidently and American accents were well maintained throughout. There was good chemistry between Paul Flynn as Bob Wallace and Nick Skinner as Phil Davis the Army buddies subsequently known as "America's favourite song and dance team". These actors were well cast with Paul as the charismatic Bob and Nick as the fun loving would be ladies man, Phil. The pair opened with a lively rendition of 'Happy Holiday' leading into 'White Christmas'. Paul and Nick both had very strong voices in a range of solos and duets. I especially enjoyed Paul leading the chorus in an energetic interpretation of 'Blue Skies' closing Act One.

The two professional show girls were Betty Haynes, played by Amy Marsh and her younger sister Judy Haynes, played by Sarah Miles. These two were also well cast with Amy being the more sensible of the two and Sarah more ambitious and risk taking. Some lovely singing here including 'Sisters' and duets with Paul and Nick as the romances developed! Well played ladies.

David Slater was the retired General Henry Waverly, painfully unsure how to live life after the military and David brought this somewhat shambolic character to life.

I loved the role of Martha Watson the hotel concierge which was superbly played by Corrina Groombridge. What a fabulous performance of 'Let Me Sing And I'm Happy' by Corrina and such stage presence. She was sassy and very confident with a sense of humour. The General's precocious grand daughter, Susan was confidently played by young Olivia Reynolds whilst former army buddy Ralph Sheldrake, a loud and brash TV presenter, was played by Stephen Taylor. Comedian of the night had to be Ezekiel Foster the laid back and very predictable caretaker played by Richard Herring.

Small but important roles were played by Jason Norton (Mike the Stage Manager), Jenny McNeillie and Madison Violet (Show girls Rita and Rhoda) and Rhoda Taylor and Tim Clarke as The Snorers.

This was a fast moving and scintillating performance ably directed by accomplished and experienced Nikki Mundell-Poole. I congratulate Nikki and all the cast and crew on this production. I enjoyed it immensely.

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