

## Ingatestone Musical & Operetta Group

## HMS Pinafore

Director – Ken Cooper

Musical Director – Betty Moore

Performed at The Community Centre Theatre, Ingatestone on Saturday 18 October at 7.45pm

This was a most enjoyable production, from the minute the curtains opened to a delightfully set stage, we were entertained. During the Overture, we were treated to the comings and goings of the sailors which served to set the tone for the whole production.

My first comment is that, possibly for the first time in a while, I was able to hear every single word enunciated by the cast. There was no need for me to read the show synopsis; it was fully explained in the vocals and the small amount of dialogue. Well done to everyone for achieving this, Gilbert and Sullivan operettas are full of fast moving vocalisations and the cast were simply brilliant.

The Principals, and indeed the whole cast, gave excellent performances. It would be churlish of me not to mention all the Principals, as every single one produced characterisations that were a joy to watch. Ken Cooper, playing Sir Joseph Porter, also directed the show and it is clear, both from his personal performance and from the production as a whole, that he has a great love for G&S. Nik Graham gave another great performance as Captain Corcoran, he always produces a strong performance and this was no exception. Michael Johnson played Ralph Rackstraw well, with great empathy and charm.

Jeremy Martin (Bob Boatstay, the Boatswain) has a good stage presence and displayed great confidence in his part. John Lambert (Dick Deadeye) was brilliant, suitably evil and grovelling by tum, exactly right for the part. James Kemble (Bob Becket, the carpenter) also gave a strong performance. I particularly liked the performance of "A British tar is a soaring soul" by Michael Johnson, Jeremy Martin and James Kemble.

The ladies cannot be left out of these comments; Rachel Watson (Josephine) has a beautiful voice, absolutely right for G&S and a joy to watch and listen to. Jacqui de la Salle (Buttercup) was excellent with some lovely characterisation. Sarah Cuff (Hebe) was a strong and elegant performer, displaying some lovely facial expressions.

I must mention the accents, here was a company based in Essex, with (probably) a preponderance of London accents. And yet the 'Portsmouth burr' was distinctive in both songs and dialogue, well done to all, it's a small thing but it is this attention to detail that lifts a show from the normal to greater heights.

I must also give praise to the ensemble; there were a lot of people on stage at some points but we saw every one and they were all giving their own characters to the production. It just made the show stand out that bit more. The band, under the direction of MD Betty Moore, produced a good sound without drowning out the performers, not an easy task but well done.

Excellent costumes, totally befitting as G&S production; beautiful scenery as I have already mentioned; good lighting and accurate sound. It was altogether a very strong and enjoyable performance. Thank you

Tessa Davies

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