

THE ROSE BOWL AWARDS

FOR AMATEUR
DRAMA & MUSIC

Wild Wild Women
By Michael Richmond

Performed by the Hanham Players
Adjudicated by Rebecca Thompson 6th June 2009

With a Romeo and Juliet spin off as its plot, this is a musical that affectionately parodies the traditional Western...

Presentation

The saloon bar was effectively established in terms of period and atmosphere. The dingy, brown/green tones, the well-placed and well-stocked bar – SL – and piano, table and chairs all contributed to a welcoming environment. Dressings included pictures, and wall cuttings – complete with bullet holes! The furniture was well-placed – the central table and chairs were moved when appropriate.

Swing doors were well constructed. There was another entrance SL behind the bar.

The sign over a wall-papered flat efficiently established for the home of the 'soiled doves.'

Lighting/FX

Warm, well-distributed hues lit the interior scenes well. White light was utilised to good effect at key moments – such as when Priscilla died - and the red tones for the brothel were effective. Roving and follow on spots suited the genre, and star FX were well-timed at the end.

Gun shots were well-timed.

Costume

Men were very well dressed in terms of hats, boots, holsters and bolo ties. Fabrics, colours and textures were all in keeping – and the whiskers appropriate! The bright colours and satins of the women's daywear were attractive and captured the period well. Alice and Myrtle were appropriately more muted; Jane's wig and floral print suitably youthful. The outfits of Madame Lola and her girls were very striking and the Tudor costumes accessorised effectively.

Musical Direction

Although this musical purports to parody the western, the score and libretto rarely capture the swing, rhythm and gusto that this genre demands. The melodies are both repetitive and somewhat sombre; the lyrics are twee and the humour blatant rather than witty. This makes musical direction rather challenging! There was some competent singing here – particularly from the men – but on the whole the numbers needed to be really sent up if the fun was to be successfully captured. The humour is very overt – and does not require subtlety: I doubt the audience appreciated the innuendo in Second Hand Rag, because the delivery was so understated. And unfortunately the vocals of Wild Wild Women were rather forced, so the attack of this number not accomplished.

However, the Earps did work well together, capturing the parody and delivering the numbers with warmth and an appropriate appreciation of tone. There were some lovely lyrical deliveries too – both Jane and Alice providing attractive, unforced delivery on their solos – but because, in my opinion, the tone of the score is somewhat incongruous, there was a lack of overall coherence between dialogue and musical delivery here.

Well done to the pianist and the keyboard player who sustained good accompaniment throughout.

Choreography

Some disciplined choreography here, utilising Western-style steps, but movement was always rather restrained and understated so that the energy of the piece was not fully captured. There were some effective moments between the Earps – great concentration and the twinkle in their eyes assuring us that this was not a serious business – good! Also, great effort from the young 'prostitutes' – never easy to be so physical on stage and they managed this well. But I was desperate for the seeds of your good ideas be allowed to blossom into wilder, more energetic moves – vary the use of levels, stand on the tables, sit on the piano, dance with the chairs...this is meant to be a 'foot-stampin' thigh-slappin' musical after all!

Direction

I can understand the appeal of this show in terms of its subject matter and humour, but, this is a piece of writing that is somewhat woolly rather than wild, and so in order to really make something of the lack lustre script and roving plot, the production needs to be bursting with energy and attack, and the schoolboy humour exploited to the full.

Casting was good, and there was some understanding of the various character types. Dialogue was, on the whole, secure, accents well-sustained and the overall pace of both word and song maintained effectively. There was some successful shaping of incidents –the opening gunshots and the build to Priscilla's death for example. Good use of auditorium for some entrances, and also some effective blocking as well, for example the card games and the lovely bed scene between Myrtle and Clint.

However, there just wasn't enough physicality and energy here. This really is a production about sex not peace and so we needed to see the lust, desire and frustration oozing from every one of these characters – this would have given the nun something to react to!! This is such a weak and rather bizarre plot, that the actors really need to play the ideas up to the audience and never take themselves too seriously! Your approach was rather understated, the songs too serious and most performances lacking in the requisite physical energy...however, there were moments when you successfully captured the tone – the carrot moment, and again the bed scene - now think about building on these so that the show really is a romp!