

This 'send up' of those 1930s black and white film musicals like *Dames*, *Gold-diggers of 1933*, *Broadway Melody* films of 1929, 1936 and 1938 and of course especially *42nd Street* looks very simple at first glance. In fact it is extremely difficult to capture the right balance between reality and 'send up'. When something is written like this as a 'spoof' the director and players dare not broaden the presentation even by a small amount. If they do the show becomes too farcical and the characters turn in caricature. At the same time obviously the presentation has to be a little bigger and broader than usual to fit the style of the writing. Few complaints about the director or cast on this occasion only once or twice very slightly did they stray on the wrong side of the line. Having judged the material on offer accurately they were set up to gain maximum effect from the material.

The band, who proved to be a distinct musical asset to the show, made a good first entrance through the hall complete with their own banter. They created a sound which fixed the period and style of the show perfectly. A good first impression also from those on stage. They moved straight into the style of the show and looked good in the costumes which benefitted from a great deal of thought having gone into their choice. It would have been nice to have seen a little more set dressing in the first Act at the theatre but having said that and in view of the full use the Director and Choreographer made of the space it would have been difficult to find that much more room for such objects.

The lighting crew were on hand to compensate to some extent for this shortage. It was good to see the light sources at the theatre. It doesn't matter how good a lighting plot is however if the presentation is not skilful enough. A fade-out at the end of a song is on the face of it the simplest of tasks for any good lighting team. If they do it correctly no one will even notice that it happened, do it badly however and everyone will be up in arms. That fade-out at the end of 'The Sailor of My Dreams' was perfect enhancing the number considerably. Shortly after this there was a good piece of direction when we had the realistic sounds of the chorus practising their tap dancing offstage. The sounds of the bulldozer knocking down the theatre was another fine offstage piece of sound work. The explosion aided once again by more good work from the lighting team set up a first Act finale extremely well.

I am always a little suspicious of using the hall so looked at that final exit before the interval with a rather jaundiced eye. This was completely unnecessary because the exit worked perfectly to end the first Act on a high note in every way. I don't know if we should give praise here to the Director or the Choreographer but if the Director takes the plaudits on this occasion then certainly the Choreographer had many occasions throughout the evening when she made excellent use of the limited space available and the limited numbers within the company. Time and time again they made attractive pictures and captured the style of the music and period.

Before we leave Act I I must make comment on the 'Singapore Sue' number in which those on stage who performed it extremely well had a great deal of assistance from the lighting team.

The set for Act II took us away from *42nd Street* straight into the Fred Astaire/Ginger Rogers' 1936 films 'Follow the Fleet'. The band once again reflected the setting returning on this occasion from the stage rather than through the hall dressed in dinner jackets. This slightly more formal appearance was an ideal touch. The steps either side of the main battleship which took up the centre back of the stage opened up the options for the Director and Choreographer considerably. These options I am glad to say were not ignored by either person. That rather cloudy, misty look to the backcloth was effective but with the grey of the ship and the blue/pink sky it all made for a rather pale overall picture.

Good work in this Act from the lighting team. The change to deep green for 'Raining in My Heart' helped to capture the mood of the number. As did the fuller light on the front stage and then transferred to the back area leaving the front in shadow when the company joined in and moved positions during the number. A nice warm glow accompanied 'Something About You', once again enhancing the moment. The spot which arrived to pick up Mona in 'Echo Waltz' could have been used quite effectively earlier on in this scene. The flashing lights which brought about Mona's quick exit from sea-sickness needed to go on for a longer period. They were almost on and off and she having reacted and exited all in a flash which hardly gave us

time to take in the picture and enjoy the joke. No problems with the pools of light for the final sequence and this ended the lighting team's contribution on a winning note.

Another distinct asset to the production was the wardrobe team. Mona's first glitzy costume, even her hair sparkled, underlined the sort of person she was. The short white gloves were a good addition to this costume. In contrast the coat Ruby wore for her first appearance was decidedly provincial. It kept up the glamour look with that long turquoise evening dress again with sequins on the bodice. One query – why was she still wearing this stage dress when she went out to lunch? The excellent fur wrap was right but Mona was the sort of woman who would have changed for an excursion outside the theatre. The girls' costume were invariably in the right style and almost unerringly with the right choice of colour. No complaints either about the Captain and sailors in their white dress uniforms, or those blue blazer style coats for Ruby and the girls. That slinky red dress Mona wore, again with sequins, jacket and sequined shoes plus once again a little in the hair fitted the character ideally. Ruby's sailor's outfit was equally good. The little white sailor's hat, strapped silver high-heeled shoes, sequined royal blue top, white skirt and the finishing touch those gloves. With the girls equally well turned out and those see-through umbrellas this attractively lit sequence was one of the real hits of the show. Those bell-like skirts for the three girls in a mixture of colours were eye-catching. The wedding dresses once again ideally matched the characters who were wearing them, they rounded off the wardrobe team's fine input to the show.

I would have liked a slightly larger bouquet for Ruby which in view of the period would have been in order. This might have caused a few problems once everybody began to move but they were not the sort of problems that were insurmountable. Not every idea in this production worked and there were a few flat spots both in production and in individual performances. They were not so numerous however or so serious that they upset the balance or in any way destroyed the overall feeling of enjoyment and fun that this show produced.