



Society : The Younger Generation Theatre Group  
Production : And The Show Goes On  
Date : 10<sup>th</sup> August 2018  
Venue : Harlequin Theatre Redhill  
Report by : Phil Wilcox

---

## Show Report

Another triumph! YGTG has pulled it off again. This, your 30<sup>th</sup> annual production, encompassed everything from tap dancing penguins to Bollywood beauties. It was also good to see so many of the older faces return – in one case from her job in Beijing, I understand. That dedication speaks for itself.

This was essentially an update of the pick of your productions over the past decade, and there was truly something for everyone, performers and audience alike. Choreography, whether for the most inexperienced artistes or the more mature returning cast, was of a high standard throughout. Director **Trudy Paine** and Senior Director **Emma Crozier**, ably aided and abetted by their six Assistant Directors, ensured a totally polished end product.

The programme, in the hands of **Toni Steventon**, was well-designed and informative and contained some excellent photographs and biogs. As last year I rather like the personalised message boxes to cast members, and even the insert sheet listing the inevitable omissions was colourful and striking. On the other hand, I have just one gripe: I would have liked the latest version of the NODA logo to have replaced the one which was featured. (This can be downloaded from the NODA website). Perhaps a thought for the future?

From the opening number, the company offered an energy-filled display, plus some exemplary ensemble singing. The constantly-changing lighting (imaginatively designed and operated by **Tamykha Patterson**), worked well, good use being made of the cyc at times. It was also apparent, as one number was swiftly followed by another, that, as I have come to expect, a great deal of thought and effort had been put into the costumes. Thumbs up to supervisor **Diane Rextrew** and busy assistants **Teresa Borg**, **Pat Radulescu** and **Sheila Dixon**.

After a stormer of an opener (taken from 2011's *Opposites Attract*), a departure for me from last year was the inclusion of a sketch – an uncredited, witty skit on *Eastenders*. This worked on the whole, but unfortunately, despite the efforts of your expert five-person radio mic team, suffered from some of the performers not having mikes, so there was a noticeable variation in volume. Sound overall, operated by **Devon Oakley**, was generally of a high quality.

There was a smooth segue from Walford to Los Angeles for the selection of Academy Award winners, complete with large, striking versions of Oscar statuettes and matching gold

costumes. Among other numbers, the dancing by the six-member troupe and singing of *City of Stars* blended well.

An effective, slick blackout led into the circus sequence, with a mixture of live (from your Musical Director **Neil Shrimpton**'s high quality small band) and pre-recorded music working well – as it did during the rest of the evening. Some spectacular acrobatics put me to shame, and I particularly enjoyed the extract from hot film of the year, *The Greatest Showman*. The black tutus showed the costumes up well.

Some confident singing, with three excellent soloists and a slick routine, made an impact in the *Hairspray* slot. As usual, the bright handpainted suspended signs depicting show names stood out, as did the scenery (brilliantly constructed by **Diane Rextrew**, **Michael Berry**, **John Blundell** and **Wendy Wigger**). The spoken intro to the Comic Relief element of the show was an unexpected surprise, and the subsequent routine was striking in every way.

Closing the first half, the tribute to departed stars in a cabaret setting was an imaginative touch. The likes of Whitney Houston (good interpretation) and Michael Jackson (resplendent in red jacket with black piping) were complemented by the tiny young singer who rendered a version of Cilla's *Anyone Who Had A Heart* with a maturity beyond her years.

A clap-along version of Amy Winehouse's *Valerie* also featured as a credible obituary, the entire sequence being accompanied by some top class choreography and constantly changing lighting, ranging from orange to rainbow hues.

I liked the entrances into the auditorium which opened the second half: very effective. On stage, an eye-catching glittering staircase was the focus for a stunning Gershwin tribute, opened by the eight talented young ladies who, wearing silver pants and contrasting tails, gave us a terrific version of *I Got Rhythm*.

The potentially tricky progress from the top of the steps to downstage was skilfully accomplished by the performer who competently sang a version of *Someone To Watch Over Me*, accompanied by another well-honed dance routine. An impeccably-dressed male group joined in exciting versions of *Rhapsody In Blue* and *Stairway To Paradise*. Liked the jazz hands!

A delightful ballet routine from *Billy Elliott* by eight youngsters pleased my eye, and the chairs were slickly struck at the end. Stage Director **Keith Barrett** (once again travelling from the Isle of Wight to spend a week on the show), Deputy Stage Manager **Mark Blundell**, Assistant Stage Manager **Gerry Winter** and their ever-reliable five-person crew carried out their essential roles with little sign of a hitch.

Over the next few minutes the costumes truly came into their own. Blue toppers and matching pants later gave way to striking red and black outfits. The Disney section also

featured a glorious pink theme. There were outstanding sequences by a section of the girls in Cruella Deville's number and the female dancers made convincing felines in *Everybody Wants To Be A Cat*. I particularly enjoyed the *King of the Swingers* duet, gold waistcoats, trumpet player and all.

The Heaven and Hell sequence, with its first rate choir medley composed by the versatile Neil Shrimpton (remarkably the only member of the substantial production team who is not an ex-cast member), worked extremely well.

Three powerful soloists within the ensemble, and tuneful harmonies from six young ladies, made their mark, while practical flame torches situated on stage contributed to the dramatic atmosphere.

However, what followed next, I have to say, truly made my night. I can honestly say that, in my many years of stagework I have never encountered a troop of tap dancing penguins. This number (part of the *Got To Dance* section) was truly inspired and effective – helped by the diminutive participants' wonderful costumes. Unforgettable!

And wardrobe hadn't finished there. The bright Asian garb for the *Bollywood Dreams* number, combined with the overall singing and dancing, were totally vibrant. An enjoyable evening was topped off by the returning, substantial, "cast from the past", singing and hoofing in various styles, both upbeat and slow.

These included three female soloists taking turns at the mike, a touch of rapping and a ripping male/female duo doing full justice to Tina Turner's *Big Wheel* in sensational style. The traditional Younger Generation rendition of *Thank You Very Much* was sung with gusto by the whole ensemble in suitably emblazoned anniversary T-shirts. Nice one.

Finally, before the house lights came up and the cast came into the audience in a mass of reds and greens and other colours, there was a rousing version of *I'll Be There For You*, completed by red split curtains and multi-coloured umbrellas.

Bouquets to all concerned in a production which was well up to your usual standard. Thank you for inviting my wife and I, not to mention NODA London Councillor Elect Andrew Rogers who, like me, was full of praise for your show. It was a lovely gesture to invite us onstage afterwards to meet and address the company. I look forward to next year's extravaganza. It will have a hard act to follow!