



Society : **The Pump House Children & Youth Theatre**  
 Production : **GUYS AND DOLLS JR.**  
 Date : **July 2006**  
 Venue : **The Pump House Theatre, Watford**  
 Report by : **Josie Shingles, NODA London area 10**

Report

This was my first visit to the Pump House and as your newly appointed NODA representative to review one of your shows, but hearing of your highly regarded reputation I was looking forward to this immensely. Of course I know Guys & Dolls like the back of my hand, but never seen it performed by children before. I was not disappointed as the company pulled it off very well and the children were both enthusiastic and delightful to watch. Its great too see such wonderful up and coming talent for the future of amdrams.

Director Lee Farman, assisted by Moya Brewer, Robin Scarborough, Karen Rhodes and Jean Staveley-Taylor, had obviously worked hard with their talented cast and some of the scenes worked better than others. I did wonder why they had cast a girl as Rusty when had so many boys to choose from. Staging was excellent mainly as the principals were so completely natural, also the majority of the chorus seemed to know what they were doing too. I guess it was difficult trying to perform the romantic scenes with such young actors. Nathan and Adelaide pulled this off by the sheer comedy of their characters, but Sky and Sarah looked decidedly embarrassed and uncomfortable at times. They must be made to realise that it is just acting and if want to be actors you have to pretend - this is one of the jobs that a director has to instil and teach. Singing with taped backing was fine so all credit to M.D. Sue McCall in that respect.

Choreography by Julie Paloma and Lee Farman was a bit patchy in places as some of the cast seemed lost at times in ensemble numbers, looking at their feet or moving in the wrong direction. This may seem a bit harsh but as was their third performance in front of the public and their final one I would have expected them to be perfect by then. Until I arrived I did not realise that you had two cast, so my review is only of the Broadway one which I saw at the Saturday matinee. Pure enjoyment would be my first impression and wonder at such maturity in some of them at such a young age. With such a massive cast it is not possible to mention everyone so I will just remark on the ones who made an impact.

George Slater-Walker was excellent as Sky, he has a very good singing voice so I'll Know, I've Never Been in Love Before and Luck be a Lady were all very well sung. Plus George was great when being the big shot gambler but looked uncomfortably wooden with the romance side of things. His reluctant lady love Sarah was beautifully played by Alex Robinson. She has a lovely singing voice so her duets with Sky were beautiful, and If I were a Bell was sung and staged really well. I also liked her duet with Adelaide too. Plus with her very natural acting Alex was most believable at all times. These two were well matched, apart from a lack of charisma between them, and shame to say I did not even see him told her hand or smile at the "bows" either.

Tom Jordan was naturally brilliant as Nathan. Terrific acting, timing, singing plus just the right amount of cheekiness and aplomb to carry off this difficult role for one so young. The partnership with Charlotte Lynch as Adelaide worked well, even though she was taller than him, because they seemed so compatible and right together. Charlotte obviously too has great potential as a comic actress.

Nicely-Nicely was also very confidently portrayed by Tom Scarborough. Another cheeky looking young actor and singer who gave a wonderful performance throughout.

All the rest of the gang gave individual performances and added to the authenticity of the gamblers group.

I had a problem with Big Jule. Why did you cast such a tiny fellow in this role when you had much bigger boys to choose from, plus could have been padded him out to give more credence to the part? Therefore as hard as Will Rapley tried to be menacing and nasty this really did not come across. He was so small he appeared comical instead.

Aaron Whitty played the role of Lt. Brannigan very well and seemed quite natural as the exasperated policeman who could never catch the gamblers "at it". The Hot Box Girls all sang well and looked cute, rather than sexy, when doing their dance number. Alix Howels was very convincing as General Cartwright as she spoke out clearly and confidently.

I loved the finale which came across with great fun and vivacity.

S.M. Charles Gunter and his hard working crew changed the various sets quickly so kept things flowing along. Lighting was excellent, as was sound too.

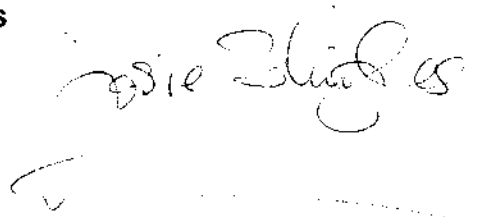
Costumes I found a bit baffling with the boys being really great and in period but the girls seemed a mish mash of styles from various eras. Might I also suggest that in future someone looks at the girls makeup which was far too garish; the bright green or blue eye shadow on some looked entirely wrong. As you are aware this is all part and parcel of the overall look of a show too and something they have to learn about.

Programme was well laid out and informative and I liked the front cover very much. Sad to say I could find no mention of your affiliation to NODA anywhere and most companies usually do give us a mention.

My thanks to your committee for asking me along to review this show and thanks also to Lee Farman and Ken the Front of House Manager for their warm welcome. I look forward to seeing Multiplex and Chatroom next week, which I guess will be a completely different experience.

With best wishes

Josie Shingles

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Josie Shingles". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name "Josie Shingles".