

Review of *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*

Being a big fan of the *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* film, starring Michael Caine and Steve Martin, I was unsure how well it would translate into a stage musical, and how the Grayshott Stagers were going to pull it off. However, I'm pleased to report that my fears were unfounded; as it is a great show with catchy musical numbers, that you find yourself humming long after the show finishes. And it was very well produced and performed. The Director, Laura Musco, and the Musical director, Chris Snelling must both be praised for their hard work in successfully bringing this show to the Grayshott stage.

The action takes place in the glamorous location of Beaumont sur Mer. Highly successful con artist, Lawrence Jameson, suddenly finds his position threatened by the arrival of arrogant young American, Freddy Benson. As they vie for the attentions (and fortunes) of the rich ladies of the town, who will come out on top? And just who is 'The Jackal'? Expect a twist or two along the way!

The set for this production was effectively simple, with a painted backdrop of the town where the action takes place. Locations were changed swiftly with the addition or removal of various props and items of furniture. At this point, I must mention the dedicated backstage crew, who changed scenes frequently, and with a swift and deft pace.

The musical numbers in this show really are fabulous, and very varied. We move from the hilarious "All About Ruprecht", to the rousing "Nothing Is To Wonderful To Be True", then on to the deliciously over the top parody that is "Love Is My Legs". To name but a few! There was some very strong singing from the principals, and a good contrast between mood and tone. The funny and cheeky elements of the plot are balanced with some moments of real stillness and pathos, particularly from Creasey as Lawrence, in his beautifully understated ballad "Love Sneaks In". The orchestra were very good; the only disappointment being that occasionally the sound levels meant that the actors' singing and dialogue was a bit lost.

The cast in this show did a fantastic job of bringing all the characters to life. Joe White as Inspector Andre Thibault, was quite hilarious with his dry sense of humour, and a very good french accent. He brought a real warmth to the character, which we don't see in the original film.

Tony Creasey, as the suave and charming gentleman Lawrence Jameson, was simply sublime. I've seen Creasey in other productions, and I think an audience always feels safe with him, as he's such a professional. Although Jameson is largely the 'straight' man, Creasey did get to flex his comic muscles in the dual role of Dr. Emile Shuffhausen. Without wishing to ruin any plot, suffice to say this a very funny part of the story, and provides a couple of very comic songs!

Susie Gow as Muriel Eubanks, was just lovely. Polished and pitch perfect, Susie is a joy to watch. I enjoyed the romantic sub-plot between Muriel and the Inspector, which was very sweet, and in particular; their musical number "Like Zis, Like Zat", which had some great choreography.

Tony Carpenter as Freddy Benson, did a fine job of portraying the cocky and 'vulgar' American who's out to steal Lawrence's crown. Carpenter had a great stage presence, and a strong singing voice. And praise must also be given to Carpenter for his confidence and poise, especially in the face of having to wear very little in some parts of the production!

Caroline Thompson had a small, but perfectly formed, role as Texan firecracker Jolene Oakes, in which she gave a wonderful, and very funny performance. She also shone as a member of the chorus.

Rachel Perkins as 'Soap Queen' Christine Colgate, gave a perfectly nuanced performance, that was sweet, comic, and fabulously naive; with an angelic singing voice to boot!

I must also mention the great work done by the chorus, who coped valiantly with the choreography, and some complicated vocal arrangements. There were some familiar and very welcome faces on stage, and a lot of hard work had obviously gone into rehearsing the steps and music. My only slight criticism would be that I would have liked to see a few more smiles, and a bit more confidence.

Well done to all involved for another really fine and enjoyable show. You did those Scoundrels proud!

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