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Bexhill Light Operatic & Dramatic Society

De la Warr Pavilion Bexhill

Leslie Bricusse and Wildhorn's

Jekyll & Hyde The Musical

Friday 1st September 2017

Director: Kitson Wellard

Musical Director: Matt Lewis

Choreographer: Sophia Lefevre

It was with a warm welcome from Treasurer Mike Grigg and F of H team that I returned to BLOODS after sometime to the exciting production of J & H. I was of course familiar with the story but this was a first for me as the musical. Jekyll & Hyde is a musical horror drama based on the novella by Robert Louis Stevenson, first produced in the US in 1997, a collaboration of Wildhorn, Bricusse and Cuden.

The audience walked into an atmospheric dark 1880's hospital scene where a perplexed Dr Jekyll whilst visiting his failing, incarcerated father sings 'Lost in the Darkness' believing that the evil in his soul has caused his illness and is determined to find out why man is both good and evil singing 'I Need to Know'. John Utterson is Dr Jekyll's lawyer and best friend. Sir Danvers Carew, is a member of the Asylum Board of Governors and Father-in-law to be. Research proposals are presented to the Governors who are mostly rich and pompous. Proposing his formula be tested on a human, they reject, but Utterson urges him to continue. An engagement party is held where guests think Emma is doing the wrong thing – engaged to a madman! She's undeterred. Jekyll and John visit the notorious 'Red Rat' where prostitute Lucy Harris is in trouble with pimp boss Spider. She is both well liked and kind hearted singing 'No One Knows Who I Am'. Roughly sent on stage she performs 'Bring on the Men'. Wanting to help her Jekyll leaves his card, returns to his lab, mixes chemicals and injects himself. A transformation occurs and he roams the streets of London. No one hears from him for a week and he sends his butler out for more chemicals and gives Utterson 3 letters should he become ill or disappear. Lucy unexpectedly arrives at Jekyll's home with nasty bruising, telling him a man named Hyde has inflicted them. The Bishop of Basingstoke has a liaison with another 'Red Rat' girl – Hyde insults, beats and kills him. Utterson and Danvers talk to the audience – both worried – citizens gossip and Hyde continues his killings. Concerned Emma visits his lab and sees his journal. Distraught she begs him to confide in her 'Once Upon a Dream'. Hyde then visits, stabs and slits Lucy's throat having pre-warned her to flee London. Returning to his lab he faces his final battle for control. During his wedding ceremony he kills Stride. Utterson tells the audience Jekyll has given up his task of finding the truth, and Jekyll begs John to kill him. Desperate, Jekyll impales himself on Utterson's swordstick. Emma weeps as Jekyll dies, finally free of Hyde's evil.

The A4 programme featured a dark cover and included some interesting historic illustrations,

costumed cast photos, committee photos, a good synopsis of scenes and musical numbers together with useful information, NODA mention all the ingredients to put forward copies for the annual Programme competition to find there were sadly three typos!!

Six talented musicians played under the guidance of Matt virtually nonstop - at times overshadowing script. Soloists were particularly well polished. Mikes at times created harsh high notes particularly when the ensemble sang. Having said that Kenny's powerful songs were superbly executed and his transformation from the gentle, passionate Jekyll to murderous Hyde stunning. Emma played by Jess Wellard, talented wife of Director Kitson complementing Kenny with delightful duets. There was much to learn and the numerous pieces were well rehearsed.

Movement was slick Sophia – sexy movements from corseted 'Red Rat' girls and especially slick was the big number 'Murder' using newspapers – good party dancing, use of brollies all most effective.

The set was brilliantly simple and the use of back projection gave a professional finish. A mention to young Callum for his computer expertise in producing historic images perfectly timed. The main large pieces were supplied by Scenic – a fully equipped folding lab, a huge transformation mirror and a very heavy chemical cabinet, a Victorian fireplace. Height changes using two rostrums and steps made for interesting grouping and the single shaped window in Lucy's room, her raised bedstead and side table made a wonderful position for Danielle Taylor's emotional numbers and final demise. I also like the use of the auditorium and steps for a couple of entries – the newsboys etc.

Lighting and sound effects, use of dry ice, blood curdling killings so atmospheric. Colours interesting particularly good use of orange and spots. Movement of furniture was slick – well thought through creating the minimum of fuss.

The Costume department created a real Victorian feel – very good individual Governor characters, elegance for Emma, sexy for Lucy and cheeky Nellie with eye catching black/red for the brothel scene. Hairstyles were well chosen, very good lace up boots, wigs, and accessories.

This was an edge of your seat production, great orchestration, with the three main characters supported well by Darrell Willis as Jekyll's friend John, Tim Gordon making a caring father, Danvers Carew, Steve Pickering a believable horror Pimp 'Spider', with Andy Mould doubling as loyal butler and Sir Archibald Proops. Lee Lyons was Simon Stride, with Alex Wengraf-Hewitt a very naughty Bishop of Basingstoke, John Harrigan as Lord Savage, Colin Adams a regal General Lord Glossop, and Julia Croft and elegant Lady Beaconsfield. They all stage 'died' superbly.

BLODS new Production Manager Kitson directed this first-class performance – the start I hope of many more after the three-year absence. Kenny Giles was the power and the rest of the cast truly supported this amazing role. Congratulations to all front, on and behind the stage members.

A disappointing company final bow. I personally felt the semi-circle of players was too large, but loved Kenny's central final turn and bow - splendid.

National Operatic and Dramatic Association

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