

NODA REVIEW: Blitz! 13th May 2017

Author: Cheryl Mumford

Blitz, written by Lionel Bart, has a score rich in melodies that are uplifting, humorous and at times very moving. The musical starts at the beginning of a night air raid in 1940 in London's Bank Underground Station.....and what a treat to review a show with its combination of nostalgia, warmth and humour. While the company in total numbered 44 souls the stage rarely looked too crowded. The back drops and street scene cloth were superb.

The team of eleven children were absolutely delightful, their number "Mums and Dads" was a joy to watch and you could see they were having fun on stage. Not only did they know their words but they also belted them out so we could hear them and acted their socks off.

Musical director, Bob Drywood, brought the score to life, along with his very talented 5 piece orchestra, doing great justice to Lionel Bart's music and sounding a lot fuller than their size normally should.

Costumes, hair and make-up were as near authentic as possible with scarves and caps strategically used to disguise modern hairstyles. Being picky, it would have been good to see a more uniform and period look to all those in military attire. The technical effects especially the convincing sound cues all worked very well. All the principal actors were well cast in their roles and each one gave very good performances.

Blitz is very much a star vehicle for the matriarchal Mrs Blitztein, and Sharon Liff did justice to the role, delivering some wonderful songs, especially the moving soliloquy So Tell Me Jack. Her barbed tongue comments were especially reserved for her Cockney antagonist, Alfred Locke, gustily played by Terry Bunton and very much set the tone of the production. Rhea Woodward as Carol and Shane Monaghan as Harry both held their own within the Blitztein family; Rhea was very convincing when her character was blinded, which is not easy to convey and Shane was a very fluid and naturally strong character throughout, culminating in the stirring "Duty Calls" which was handled with such enthusiasm. Nathan Drake provided the love interest as Georgie Locke. He was most endearing with strong vocals and his songs were beautifully delivered. Amy Elizabeth Bevan as Elsie gave a robust performance with plenty of humour giving a performance that I enjoyed very much.

The rest of the cast ably played their parts to give this piece a real ensemble feel, but I must single out the natural talent of Pamela Hayfield as Mrs Josephs. An understated performance that said so much. She understood the Jewish intonation and delivery exceptionally well, which created such pathos and authenticity.