



Be inspired by amateur theatre

Wadhurst Dramatic Club
Way Out West in a Dress – Book by Billy St John
Music & Lyrics by Bill Francoeur
Wadhurst Memorial Hall
Friday 22nd January 2016
Director/Choreographer: Kay Sasada
MD: Martin Steadman

Picture an 1880's setting in the old Wild West. A real toe-tapper from start to finish, quite unknown to me, full of fun, vitality, lively numbers, dance routines and lot of laughs. So to Lucky Lady, Nevada Clarence Rawlins and his theatre troupe venture to discover his inheritance and due to a misunderstanding from his Aunt's bad handwriting the inheritance turns out to be the Lucky Lady Salon and not as thought the Lucky Lady Saloon! On discovery of this fact and in order not to lose face Clarence and co come up with an idea and change persona with a cross dressing fiasco of proprietress Lady Claire and stylist assistant Rogaine from Paris. This inevitably creates chaos particularly with the two young ladies they fall for piano playing Melody Plunkett and saloon dancer Carrie O'Key! Greedy, ruthless saloon owner Colt Revolver wants more and with saloon hostess, daughter of Jessie James, plans are hatched to perform dastardly deeds by obtaining the Salon to tunnel through and rob the bank! We are introduced to a number of local characters including the pale faced Funeral Director R.I Peay, female rancher unwashed, 'til persuaded to visit the saloon, Rhoda Steed with sidekick Russell Grubb her hillbilly cook. The proposed heist and kidnap are hilariously foiled, Aunt's hidden treasure is found in the curtain pole of the salon, boys get girls, and all have a stomping rip roaring hoedown.

FRONT OF HOUSE: Club supporters were dressed up in Western attire with 'ye hahs' galore and off we rode to our saddles towards the front. The refreshment bar was in full swing and we enjoyed coffee and chocolate in the interval.

PROGRAMME: Nice A5 mainly sepia and cream with super centre page picture of costumed cast set against a typical cowboy background boardwalk with a propped up wagon wheel, hanging Stetson and lasso. Everything we needed was included – but no musical numbers.

SCENERY: Once more **Nance** and **Colin Hand** came up trumps. Each side of stage was a jointed flat well decorated with them there hills and cactus plants together with great 'Wanted' signs. The opening was simple and effective using the five chairs equally spaced for the train journey. The main set was split by saloon doors opening both ways with the perfect saloon bar to one side and the beauty salon in its pink to the other. Always very imaginative, interesting detail to finish - shelves with all kinds of libations including prune juice, lotions and potions. The backdrop of the mineshaft was excellent, showing the track in the tunnel with glowing lanterns. **Margaret** and **Pat Wells** provided an array of props.

COSTUMES: A big team costumed the cast in western appearance that has to be applauded. The Saloon girls led by Jessica were colourful and saucy, with good finishing touches and particularly fine boots for the dancing. Arriving In storm coats and boots, Stetsons and kerchiefs, our cross dressers looked their parts and with the addition of perfect frocks, wigs and a touch or rouge (with very fast changes) were hysterical. Individual townfolk were well kitted out and our baddie looked particularly menacing in his long coat. Good country look for the ranchers, and the townfolk ladies most elegant. Hats to match and beards when required! The youngsters were well turned out to shine in their own scene performing **Emma Steadman's** 'Branding Rhoda'. **Marianne Johnson, Judy**

National Operatic and Dramatic Association

15 The Metro Centre, Peterborough PE2 7UH

Tel 01733 374 790 Fax 01733 237 286 Email info@noda.org.uk Web www.noda.org.uk

Twitter @NODAtweets Facebook NationalOperaticDramaticAssociation

Registered charity number 254640 Registered company number 241572 Registered in England and Wales at the above address. Patron: **The Lord Lloyd Webber**

Alexander and helpers created the period hair and make up for the girls and the boys – the red curly wig for Colt worked well as did the hair washing and styling scenes.

SOUND/LIGHTING: The worst nightmare of the technical team a power failure and on opening night too! A trip switch tripped, and again and yet again! However, with the **Bush** expertise and a most understanding audience, the cast holding their nerve, service was resumed for action. The tracked music was just right in volume, personalised mikes were effective, noises off well cued with a good lighting plot.

THE PRODUCTION: This performance was action packed from start to finish. A lively company performance of title song ‘Way Out West in a Dress’ set the pace. **Kay Sasada** not only directed, she choreographed and danced! The musical numbers were full of energy, were well rehearsed with **Martin Steadman** as MD. The stage appeared crowded at times, but when action was brought forward and to front of the stage giving greater freedom. Great comedy from the two troupe leads came across to the audience very well indeed, and how our hero Clarence **Carl Gamage** managed to maintain falsetto amazed me. **Russ Kirton** - Colt with **Carl** as Lady Claire ‘You’re the Girl of My Dreams’ a very melodic ballad, was well executed. The very difficult, fast, wordy song ‘Son of a Snake’ did credit to **Daisy Gould** as Melody – what a tongue twister. ‘We Do Hair’ with **Carl** as Lady Claire and **Paul Desrosiers** with his good French accent was a real hoot. The dance troupe together with director, led by **Grainne Murphy** as Jessica performed an energetic Oom-pah Can-Can even showing their bloomers! Cameo parts became their own individual characters and the children did the company proud. Well done, you knew your steps and your words. Good strong roles were sustained throughout, supported by well rehearsed ensemble work. Altogether a cracking evening.

Thank you Wadhurst for a real fun entertainment.

A précis of this review will be posted on the NODA website shortly.

Anne Lawson
Regional Representative
NODA South East
District 3