



ateur theatre

Society : Bishopshalt ODS
Production : 9 to 5 – The Musical
Date : 4th December, 2021
Venue : Bishopshalt School
Report by : Carole Baynes with intro from Tony Austin

Show Report

It was a thrill to receive my invitation to the BODS pre-Christmas musical again this year after the disappointment (shared by many of the cast in their programme notes) of the Covid hiatus in 2020 and to have tickets for its final performance! Thank you to Administrator, Box Office Manager and so much more **Claire Brown** and all involved in planning and carrying out the huge amount of work needed to take what would inevitably be a risky enterprise through to its triumphant fruition. And it so nearly didn't happen – for me being called in for my cataract operation on the Tuesday and so unable to drive and doubtful of my ability to see straight in time – and for BODS themselves with cast members ordered to self-isolate and unable to appear. What bad luck for **Mabel Ellingham** and **Beula Creane** after all the preparation and rehearsal, hopefully soon able to return to normality! My saviour was long-time NODA Rep for London District 9 and even longer friend **Carole Baynes** who picked me up from home, drove me to the school, watched and listened and will write about the show much better than I could, including the **BODS Saviours** bravely taking over roles at short notice so the show could go on.

What I can say is that the organisation Front of House with timed slots for arrival, compulsory masks and lots of hand sanitisers was impressive, as was the space between our seats in the front row (thanks!) and the edge of the stage, quite enough to eliminate transmissions of droplets during singing. The minimal raised enclosure USB, containing MD and Head of Music **Minesh Shah-Sylvester** and his professional **six-strong band** including at least two former pupils and the former holder of those positions **Stuart King**, did a similar job minimising transmission possibilities, while our position seated between **Mrs King** and retired Stage Manager **Terry Sharp** (still returning to design the impressive Lighting and, I think, the projected scenic backings) provided us with sources of useful background information as well as directions to and company while enjoying our interval refreshments.

With a cast expected to be thirty-eight strong and a large number of different scenes, the Design Concept needed great ingenuity, which happily Designers and Directors **Nicole Burman** and **Kim Coles** provided and used to the full. Their ranks of chairs, linked side by side and mounted on wheels to represent office desks, a mortuary wagon, just places to sit and so much more, perfectly fitted the spaces between the legs at each side of the stage and, brilliantly controlled by **the Cast**, ensured immediate transformations as necessary. Both the Set and the many Props required throughout the show seem to have been mainly the responsibility of the **PA Team**, with help in various capacities from **Richard Cartwright**, **Beth Menabney** and **Faye Russell**, all under the control of Production Managers **Kerry Magee** (also Costume Supremo) and **Claire Brown**, as were the team **Rachel Briggs**, **Megan Hubbard**, **Sunny Knight**, **Phil Harris**, **Neva Holm** and **Jess Young-Williamson**, multi-tasking both Front of House and Backstage duties, while **Michael Smith** kept the Sound adjusted controlling the huge number of personal mics, one each for everyone with lines to speak.

It was a privilege and pleasure to be able to see your superb performance, which I enjoyed thoroughly. My thanks to you all – and to Carole whose wonderful report is on the following pages. Tony Austin.