

1985 *Carousel*

Carousel – a fine fairground fantasy

If you missed 'Carousel' at the Dorking Halls last week then shame on you. What made East Surrey Operatic Society's version of the Roger and Hammerstein classic stand and above the rest was the strong and imaginative production by director Gillian Jams and music director Nigel Cooke. From the moment the Starkeeper - a cameo role superbly performed by Philip Felsted - pulled back the opening curtain to the time he closed it at the end, we were treated to some fine performances from an excellent cast of principals and chorus.

Patricia Felstead played Mrs Mullin, the carousel owner with strength and vigour as did Roger Nelson as the villain Jigger Craigin. One of the show's best known songs "When you Walk Through a Storm" was sung by Susan Rowlinson as cousin Nettie and it was a highlight of the production.

But the make or break of any show is dependent on your leading characters. Rose-Marie Collins as Carrie and Simon Cooksey as Enoch Snow gave fresh characterisations to comic roles that are often played too straight. Michelle Luck as Julie was a delight to watch and a joy to listen to. I found her totally convincing as the patient and forgiving wife of her good-for-nothing husband Billy. The part of Billy Bigelow calls for a versatile actor and singer in a demanding role and Julian Mortimer should be congratulated for his performance. If his speaking voice was at times a little sharp pitched, his singing was excellent and of quite the highest standard I have heard on the amateur stage for a long time.

Simple but effective choreography by Shirley Knight enhanced company numbers. A special mention for Christine Lowestoft as Billy's daughter Louise for her solo dancing. The use of performers from the Horley Little Top Circus for the open fairground scene was a super idea but sadly this was the one time when the stage looked overcrowded and so their skills were not shown to best advantage.

There were some interesting lighting effects although at times a little patchy, but sets, costumes and a full orchestra all helped to make this *Carousel* a thoroughly entertaining and worthwhile production to watch. Congratulations to director Gillian Jarvis and her company.

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