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Clevedon Gilbert & Sullivan Society 18th February 2012

***The Sorcerer* Princes Hall Clevedon**

Producer Jane Bull MD Carol Kenway

Congratulations to you all on your society's 40th Anniversary Production. It was a brave committee that decided to present one of G & S's lesser-known operettas, but in my opinion a very successful decision.

For me, as a NODA Representative, it is a joy to see something I have never seen and actually know little about. I came to the performance with no preconceived ideas or opinions. Once I overcame the realization that I didn't recognise any of the music and didn't know the story (thank you for your comprehensive synopsis in the programme) I sat back and enjoyed this G & S romp... a cross between a farce and a satirical musical comedy. I needed to concentrate on the delivery of the words both in the dialogue and song, to follow the story, but as the sound system was good and the diction clear, there was no problem.

The excellent overture from the orchestra was an attractive opening for the comic proceeding to come. As we were introduced to the 'major' players the gist of the story became clear, Alexis Pointdexter wanted to throw the Victorian class war into confusion and had a 'cunning plan'. After obtaining the 'Philter' from a magician, at a banquet he slips this love potion into the teapot. All present drink the tea, and after they sleep they awake to find that they fall in love with the first person they see! All is confusion but turns out well in the end.

Attractive scenery set the scene, nice, bright, and clean. The perspective on the house cloth of the French doors and windows was bit off beam (incorrect shadowing) but the perspective on the staircase was excellent.

The lighting was effective as most of the scenes were set in daylight. I like bright lighting (I like to be able to see the faces of the company). The 'Incantation' scene was of necessity darker, to provide atmosphere, and worked well with the flash boxes activated- spot on cue.

As already mentioned, the sound was effective. I was uncertain if radio mics were being used... if not then the cast projected very well. I had a problem with Dr Daly...when he sang in his lower register, I could hear every word, but in his upper register his sung dialogue was indistinct. I wondered if he had a cold or throat problem.

The costumes were attractive, bright, clean, and worn well by everyone. Aline's second dress was a delight. The red dresses of the 'bell' dancers looked most dramatic against the other company members dress and made the whole scene most attractive.

Considering the balance of male performers to female, the company singing was very good and all the vocal parts could be heard clearly. The singing was very good throughout and as already mentioned ...the unknown music was delightful, often fun and very easy on the ear. I particularly like the company singing of 'Now to the banquet we press'.

The orchestra was very well balanced, and never compromised the singers or dialogue over music. The playing was excellent, a nice balance of strings and woodwind. Excellent tempi and players controlled very well by the MD.

The limited movement was interesting and performed well by the company.

The direction was very thoughtful. A strong hand with a modern touch was at the helm and it showed. The ensemble and the principals in performance created interesting pictures on stage and the whole stage was used well and never looked over crowded. The wide age range of the cast limited some action, but it was still always consistent with the story and well presented. The inclusiveness of cast members with health issues is to be applauded and I congratulate everyone concerned. There was excellent 'modernisation' of the script and the local references were a delight and very funny. The pace of the show was good; time flew... it was a short operetta.

The chorus performed excellently and their singing was very good, although there were occasions when I couldn't understand the words, but in ensemble work this is often a problem.

The casting of this operetta was very good; all principals had carefully observed their characters and remained in character throughout.

David Nicklen as Dr Daly looked wonderful as the aging vicar, his acting was very good but his singing was not the greatest. David...if you had a bad throat, for this is how it sounded, you were wise not to push the voice and I hope it improves soon.

Dave Kelly... Sir Marmaduke Pointdextre, performed very well; with his fine baritone voice and comic timing he was ideally cast.

Philip Pover... Alexis Pointdextre, I have watched Philip with interest since I first saw him with the Weston Savoyards. His fine voice and excellent acting skills make him a pleasure to watch.

Dave Robinson... John Wellington-Wells - well what can say except excellent... you old scene-stealer! The twinkle in your eye and comic genius is such fun; long may you continue to entertain us.

Geoff Pearce... Notary... you are another scene-stealer, and such fun. From the upright Notary to an old lecher, you stole your scenes, well done.

Rachael Cooper... Aline Sangazure, was the epitome of a grand and upper class lady. You looked beautiful, sang divinely and I loved your performance.

Glynis Barcham ... Constance. You have a real penchant for comedy and perform so well. With your lovely voice you always give your very best, well done.

Margaret Lowry.. Mrs Partlett, I loved your West Country accent it, made me laugh out loud as it was so unexpected. A nicely portrayed character and performance.

Jenny Faubel... Lady Sangazure. I felt you looked a little young to be the mother of Aline and the (not very good) wig didn't help you in any way. Despite this you delightfully captured the hautiness and dignity of the old lady and had such fun in your duet with John Wellington-Wells. I enjoyed this very much. It was a difficult role, portraying someone of age, but you succeeded very well.

This was a most enjoyable evening; this rarely performed operetta *The Sorcerer* was very entertaining. It made me laugh and I enjoyed some new and excellent music, thank you for making this possible.

The company and hospitality of your charming President Ray Booth and his wife, was most appreciated. Thank you also for inviting me to present some NODA Long Service Awards, this always gives me pleasure and to present a Diamond Pin to Gordon Lawrence was a great honour.

Best wishes for your anniversary year and I look forward to *Iolanthe* next year. Thank you for inviting me.

Sue Pomeroy Sue Pomeroy NODA SW Regional Representative District 9

An edited version of this report will appear online at www.noda.org.uk

Any observation made by the reviewer can only be based on what he/she sees at the performance in question. The reviewer may have received information in advance of the performance and it is inevitable that his assessment will be effected by that knowledge.

The N.O.D.A. Representative's intention is to give an objective critique of the overall production and in particular the performance viewed. It should be remembered that any review of this nature can only be objective as far as the techniques used during the performance observed. Any criticisms expressed may not have been valid at other performances, and are only made to encourage higher standards in Amateur Theatre.

It is hoped that the audience's appreciation of your efforts will have given everyone a lift and encouraged you to greater achievements in the future and that the observations made by the reviewer will prove helpful in improving future productions NODA 2012