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theatre review overview



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Name:
Me & My Girl (BLOC production)

Venue:
[Bristol Hippodrome](#), St Augustine's Parade, Bristol, BS1 4UZ

Dates:
11th to 15th November 2008

How to Book:
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Reviewer:
Richard Lewis

theatre review

Me and My Girl 'the happiest show in town' is Bristol Light Opera Company's 75th anniversary production. It all began back in 1934 with Cox & Box/ The Pirates of Penzance and in the early years stayed true to their company title, performing Light Opera. Musicals began to appear in the annual show in the early 1960's, Kismet, the Music Man, Brigadoon, but they alternated with the likes Naughty Marietta and The Merry Widow.

These days the taste for Light Opera has deserted the company, it's been pretty much that way for thirty years and you have to admire the ambition over that time; My Fair Lady, Fiddler on The Roof, The Sound of Music, Barnum – Evita! Nothing if not ambitious, more so when you consider they have no financial sponsorship and rely on the box office from one year to plough into the following year's production.

What BLOC bring to their show is enthusiasm and an ability to fill the stage with more performers than any professional show could ever hope to. It provides for rousing chorus numbers and plenty of colour – and here Me and My Girl benefits from both. The musical, which tells the rags-to-riches story of a cockney called Bill Snibson who becomes Earl of Hareford, features a script that received a going-over from Stephen Fry early in his career. The vintage songs are by Noel Gay, including the Sun Has Got His Hat On and Leaning on a Lamppost.

With so many servants, so many aristocrats on offer one can't help but feel they have achieved the 'upstairs downstairs' vibe that sits at the heart of the story. Emma Watkins and Simon Vardakis play Sally and Bill and enjoy their ever moment on stage. Vicky Hartland's Lady Jacqueline and Jacqui Bell's Duchess are excellent in their supporting roles but Chris Parslow – a man who is by trade a freelance training consultant – wouldn't look or sound out of place in a professional production.

Okay, the scene transitions could have been tighter and the set design more ambitious but this is am-dram, presented by dedicated folk who spend months preparing for their big week each year. Be generous, you'll leave with a smile and a warm glow.

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