

**NAME OF COMPANY**      **TAOS Musical Theatre**  
**NAME OF PRODUCTION**    **The Witches of Eastwick**  
  
**VENUE**                      **Arc Theatre, Trowbridge**  
**DATE**                        **6th June 2014**  
**ADJUDICATOR**            **Caroline Joy**



## **PRESENTATION**

### **SET including STAGE FURNITURE AND PROPS and Stage Management**

The TAOS musical theatre company made maximum use of a fairly limited venue.

The set design was simple and effective, conjuring up the New England location perfectly with its white picket fences. For its simplicity, however, the only downside was the set changes, which were a little lengthy and noisy, occasionally detracted from a first class performance. Perhaps more use of special effects could have come into play here, such as the continuation of the rain and/ or musical interludes during the set changes.

The curtain stage right unfortunately did inhibit some of the action which particularly affected the impact of some of the scenes, especially the bewitched cello, which I had to stretch out to see as it was completely tucked away by the drop curtain.

The more solidly realised mansion for Van Horne was a gothic delight with all that red satin and black interior. This contrasted well with the bright celestial church with its projected stained-glass window.

### **SOUND, LIGHTING and F/X**

Being an amateur company does have its limitations, the 'flying' scene was a valiant attempt at making the most with what you had. The set, sound and lighting was impressive, giving the impression of the witches levitating as the stage turned red.

The lighting design played up the supernatural aspects of this small town: a moon hovers on the back screen, surrounded by white picket fences on stage; flashes of lightning and the sky turning red are frequent occurrences. The back screen was used effectively to portray the tennis court, the rain lashing down outside and the whirlwind whisking off Van Horne back to hell. The lighting design was eminently successful in creating the building sense of foreboding throughout the performance.

### **COSTUME AND MAKE-UP**

The costumes were wonderful. Period appropriate for the 1950s and a flash of colour, they serviced the story brilliantly. It was great to see the witches' wardrobe choices develop along

with their growth into sexually awakened women.

## **DIRECTION**

*Lyn Taylor*

The Witches of Eastwick was directed with style and pace. Great spatial relationship, blocking and timing was achieved. The principals' scene work flowed well, and the ensemble, were engaged with the action at all times.

The interest this show has generated in your audience numbers throughout its run is impressive. Your interpretation stayed just on the right side of risqué with some very funny innuendo and just enough sauciness to incite wolf whistles from the rather enthused audience members. One scene however could have been made more dramatic with regard to the reactions and physicality of the townspeople, during Van Horne's descent back to Hell. More reaction to the power of the storm and whirlwind was needed, perhaps grabbing onto their hats, chairs, and other members of the church congregation.

This production was ably and imaginatively produced, and performed to a very high standard by a group of people who had evidently spent many hours of their time learning and rehearsing together to produce a show of which they should be justly proud.

## **MUSICAL DIRECTION**

*Julian Clementson*

Musically the show was impressive, made even more so by the excellent sound that the band achieved.

There was a good balance between the instruments, the music, and vocals. Key harmonies and melody lines were brought out through the blending of sounds. You drew out the strengths in both the principles and cast. The show was full of lively numbers by the spirited chorus of townsfolk, especially the showstoppers 'Dirty Laundry' and 'Dance with the Devil' attested to the skill of the musical director.

## **MOVEMENT AND DANCE**

**CHOREOGRAPHY including DANCE SKILLS AND GROUPING**

*Allison Moore*

The understated dance routines, which were very effective, are very much a feature of this production, and you utilised the small stage to its full advantage. The witty choreography captured the uptightness of the townspeople with uniform movements, as well as the freedom and sexiness needed for the 'Dance with the Devil' girls.

## **ACTING**

*CHARACTERISTION*

All of you must be commended on keeping up superb Rhode Island accents throughout.

**Alex Lou Knight**

Alex possessed such stage presence in the portrayal of the self-assured leader of the trio. You committed to your part with sheer drive and physicality. We were drawn into your character's dilemma's - appearing at first appalled by Daryl's arrogance and bravado, later falling in love with him. You possessed a mature sensuality and a strong vocal presence - A torch singer of real power, coupled with brilliant comic timing.

**Jane Leonie Macaslin**

Music Teacher Jane is in love with her string instrument and craves a musical and sexual partnership. Your transformation from insecure, prim, uptight schoolteacher, to carefree sexy and reckless Janey was hypnotic. You played your role with confidence, really capturing the anxiety of your character before letting your desire run wild. You have a powerful singing voice and made a huge impression in the transition from retiring wallflower to ravishing vixen.

**Sukie Dora Bishop**

You made a delightfully shy and bookish Sukie, who just wants to be brought alive, like heroines in the stories in her romantic books. This made your outburst at the little girl near the end absolutely hilarious! You gave the character a guileless charm, which was personified by a gorgeously dorky laugh, together with a sweet sense of naïveté, and all bound up by a desperate need to be liked. Your rendition of 'Words, Words, Words' was delightful, and as Sukie found more confidence, the audience got more laughs: your comic timing was utterly spot on.

As a trio you all projected your characters' vulnerabilities with strength and confidence. The three of you all gave great performances, and all different – in looks, in style, and in register. In the characters you were playing you complemented each other easily, and provided a lovely counterpoint. You pulled out all the stops. From plain Janes to vamps, (male audience appreciation was noted!), You were completely bewitching and are exceptional actresses.

**Darryl Gary Robson**

You arrived like the impact of a whirlwind and a charm almost beyond belief. We believed in your unique powers to charm and bewitch and seduce all three women, with a wicked glint in your eyes. For the most part you were vocally secure but at times you tripped over your lines a little, however your delivery was strong and vibrant and your impact grew throughout the performance as the audience became more involved with you and you played up to us perfectly. You certainly possessed natural magnetism. In the nicest possible way, you oozed creepy charisma, both repellent and charming, and those red socks were the cherry on top. I still can't erase that image from my mind!

**Felicia Allison Moore**

You were a pillar of overbearing strength, as the abhorrent Felicia you gave a fine detailed performance as the self-appointed town community leader high on moral standards. As town busybody, who under a nasty spell spews up alien objects, like tennis balls and feathers, followed by a spectacular bout of projectile vomiting, you pulsed with perfect physical comic timing. You handled the 'regurgitation' of various small props effortlessly, and your vocal delivery was always even and focused - You were terrifyingly funny – The audience was more afraid of you than the devil! Your acting ability was wonderful, especially how you mastered

the regurgitating objects.

**Clyde** *Andrew Curtis*

A wonderful performance as the husband to Felicia and local newspaper editor, suffering most of the consequences. Your portrayal, as her suicidal husband, is also touching and funny. You brought the right kind of tragic to the stage, and we knew there was always going to be dark humour to follow.

**Michael** *Lewis Kirkpatrick*

I enjoyed watching you build up to climax of your romance with Jennifer. You embodied your part with typical teenage appeal.

**Jennifer** *Martha Drane*

You captured the awkwardness of a young girl at the beginning, ending with a very electrifying 'Sandy from Grease' moment. Your solo 'I Wish I May' was breath-taking, you have a beautiful singing voice.

When you sang 'Something', it was clear that your voices blend very well together.

**Little Girl** *Anabella Fairgrieve*

You were so sweet as the winsome little girl who brought good energy to the snippets of narration, and was vocally clear and confident, and the audience loved you - but even we were thinking WHO ARE YOU. Sukie made it apparent when she blatantly revealed your sole real purpose - to be shouted at and scared off-stage.

**Fidel** *Clive James*

As van Horne's maudlin butler, Fidel, you had just the right mix of comic dead pan expression and disinterested body language. Your last scene was scene stealing at its best. A standout, riotous, nearly wordless performance.

**The Rest of the Cast**

*The Parsleys, The Neffs and The Marinos*

As the various couples, you all breathed life into these characters, drawing us into the community of Eastwick.

**Marge**

As the gossip of the town who wants to impress Felicia, and be in her gang, you gave a perfectly timed comic performance, by popping into widows and snooping over picket fences.

**Rebecca**

Your characterisation and reaction to Darryl was expressively well timed.

**Townpeople**

The mandate of portraying 1950s, conservative do-gooders was more than achieved. Self-satisfied expressions and pompous postures shaped your overall look. When singing as a group, as always with TAOS, the sound was a wall of perfectly timed, pitched harmonies and melodies. The style reflected the tone of the town. The strength of this show is also down to a strong, professional chorus who backed up the principals perfectly.

You all had ample opportunity to display your theatrical talents in the variety of numbers,

ranging from touching solos to the ensemble dance routines.

### **Overall Achievement**

The production does have its limitations with minimal set. ‘The Witches of Eastwick’ possesses an often challenging pace and energy level to keep up with, however, the storyline was worked at hard to sustain the audiences’ interest throughout.

Highlights of the show, were the strong female leads and the delivery of their individual vocal numbers and superb blending in their shared trios. The three part harmonies from these dazzling voices were tight and well balanced. Individually, they have created well-formed characters whose imperfections and strengths complement each other. The camaraderie flew off the stage. We believed in these relationships. We mustn’t forget one of the other highlights – Darryl’s seduction of the ladies!

This is a show whose main aim is to provide a fun night of entertainment; and in that capacity you triumphantly succeeded.

Thank you for your hospitality and for a devilishly enjoyable evening. I hope to see you all again in the future.

