

I always enjoy my visits to Little Waltham. The Hall has a special atmosphere. I noted the flags and bunting outside (no passerby could miss the show!) Inside the girls in navy uniforms on the door, and the flags and posters and notices of 1939-45 adorning the walls - I liked particularly the NAAFI sign to the bar, and what to do in the event of an Air Raid.

The band always looks very smart and was particularly so with red bow ties and white shirts.

Your programme is always most informative and the pictures of the cast was most welcome, but I did find the use of the script type-face in the small size a bit difficult to read in the dimmish light in the auditorium. At home in a proper light it was OK but one does like to be able to read the cast list and the song titles when at the show.

Presentation You have enormous difficulties with your tiny stage but the apron enables you to make your acting area seem much bigger than it really is.

Set /Furniture The sets were very good, adaptable to most needs, you brought a flag with Churchill surmounted from over the stage, and the air raid shelter and the dining room were quite acceptable on the DR corner. Small stools were used with effect for a couple of scenes, nothing else was needed. Very fine backcloth of planes for the second half.

Costumes There were I understand over 100 and had been a nightmare! All worked well. Though I wasn't sure that the red white and blue boaters of the children at the end was a good idea. Their flag waving needed a bit more 'production'. With a minimum of fuss (to us out in front any how) the cast managed changes with maximum effect. The fashions of the women's clothes were on the whole 1939-45 and not very flattering I'm afraid. The hats were good.

Make up This was good for the men throughout and unobtrusive. The girls had not, to begin with, an overall colour. One person was very pale in the first line up stage ^{right} left with the 3 men, and one person's eye make up was much overdone with black, which as the show progressed dispersed and was then flattering, which it had not been to begin with.

Hair For the men not short enough for the time. It's a bit much to ask for real short back and sides ^h which was the vogue 1939-45. The women's hair on the whole was good and considerable trouble had been gone to in several cases to have a period look.

Lighting This was very complicated indeed and from the travelling spot to the final curtain very well worked out, and helped to create the atmosphere of the time.

Sounds These were very good, atmospheric, on cue and well handled throughout. The use of tape for some of the speeches Churchill's in particular, and some of the music (big bands) fitted in with the minimum of fuss.

You had good technicians at work on both the lighting and the sound.

Musical Numbers

The opening number of the Chattanooga Choo Choo could not have been bettered, when it was taken over by the band in the hall the soloist was a bit overwhelmed. This was the only number when the band tended to drown the singers, after they settled down to accompany, and were a very important part of the success of the show. Next came the soloist with If I were king for a day. We heard every word of this song sung with a true voice and with the rest of the cast standing stock still all in black and white with red bow ties it was most effective, followed by Let the people sing sung cheerfully and with vigour thus setting the tone of the whole show.

Andrews Sisters next with Roll out the barrel, defiantly sung Land of hope and glory sung behind Chamberlains announcement of the fact 'this country is at war with Germany

(I did wonder at this point how many in the cast were old enough to remember this - I thought not many - but you managed so well throughout to get the feel of the age)

Scene 2 The general singing at the beginning of this scene worked well with several people singing single lines. Later When the lights go on again was sung with feeling. Mother again There'll be blue birds over most nostalgic. Well done Churchill's speech was backed with very quiet 'There'll always be an England' This was most moving - I was so pleased you used so much of the speech.

Scene 3 The Western Brothers You needed to be a bit more 'wrist watch' to use a contemporary expression in upper crust. They had very distinctive speech-singing characteristics. Good background to RAF boys in places.

Scene 4 Colonel Bogey back ground and then Underneath the churchyard, sung with gusto.

Scene 6 George Formby was characterised very much, but was back^{ed} very cheerfully by chorus in white trousers blazers and boaters.

The song and strip tease with Jane didnt quite work. Technically it was all right but there seemed embarassment there. It was a time for the broad smile and knowing looks, which were absent.

You stepped out of a dream, sung well by both. She looked super in long white dress and moved to the music well. He was very stiff and anxious looking - but dont give up, you look good in tails and will learn to relax.

Scene 8 Lille Marlene sung well with one side whistling - I had thought to have it sung in German. I dont think it was?

This is the army Mr. Jones, ^{the movement} worked well and the song was put over with enormous panache

The 3 women left behind, Patricia I havent said thanks, Maudie In Room 504 and Doris We'll meet again. All sung with enormous feeling, you all really think your way through your songs

Finally this half ended with a real 1940's atmosphere with Please say Hello, We'll meet again, Wish me luck, and Give me a smile. The audience were well pleased

Splendid Big Band music to get the audience in the mood for the second half. 3.

Scene 1 Coming in on a wing and a prayer RAF boys picked up the right atmosphere. Here we are. Out of cigarettes was well staged and sung, and then the couple s danced to A Nightingale sand in Berkeley Square, very poignant followed by a train whistle and steam train moving off.

Scene 2 Shoo Shoo Baby. This was good, sung with broad smiles and with a routine interupted by soldiers etc. The song went into There were three little sisters which was enjoyed by everyone. 2 landgirls sang Back to the Land again thought through and enjoyed. After the yokels Run rabbit run ended the scene noisily.

Scene 3 Hey little hen - the words were not very distinct from the younger members She's the girl that makes the thing by the family and Sal worked well and was a very good introduction to the following scene with the 3 munition workers. Sal's song I want a very very brown gown was splendid and had a feel of the mid 40's and lots of energy. Sam as the partner put this over well. It was a very good duo.

Scene 4 Hey there mister set us off on the American influence which pervades much of the rest of the show. Energetic again with not much nostalgia - Deep in the heart of Texas and I've got spurs that jingle jangle jingle Yi, Yi, Yi, Yi, Carmen Miranda. This was not a success I felt it should have been. I felt you were not very happy?

The Dont fence me in number looked good with good changing of partners, very good teamwork and production here

Scene 5 Western Brothers Well thats it blokes again well put over but not really a good enough take off to be billed as such.

Scene 6 The finale was splendid - lots of colour, good singing and masses of energy still. A really good rousing send off for the audience.

Production I use the same categories as I do for plays

Interpretation This was particularly good overall. There was definitely a feel of England at was and how we felt, shewn in the music and dramatic scenes of the time.

Grouping/movement This is very difficult for you all and was managed with considerable skill all the time. Very well rehearsed.

Exits and entrances. Always slick, making for good continuity

Teamwork Particularly strong here - you had to have excellent co-operation both on and off the stage from everyone.

Pace This was good throughout and the momentum was maintained till the final curtain.

Acting I will talk about the dramatic side by taking the characters chronologically

Chamberlain you looked the part and moved carefully and spoke the ^{/well known} lines clearly.

ARP Wardens Good understanding of the situation

Old ladies doing the hokey coky a diversion

People in Air Raid Shelter, good ensemble playing with some strong characterisations

Foster Mother and Father - pretty obnoxious toffs trying to be understanding
Children - insolent to effect. You both spoke up well, we heard every word.

Alvar Lidell Well dressed as they were in 1939 to read the News. Well spoken
Lord Haw Haw Not quite the right voice. He is on tape I am sure, listen again.

3 young RAF pilots This is well placed to be serious as it is after AL's news
bulletin about raids, so here you really can be sincere. I felt you could have made
more of this

The following scene in the planes looked good but was difficult to do with minimal
help from the staging, but there was light and sound to help.

Scene 4 girl 1 with Do not despair - could have been more tragic and brave.
She made it hopeful which I am sure was right but there is such an undertone of
tragedy which wasn't there. Girl 2 with You went away was quite straight forward.

Evacuee boy just how you would have written a letter. Yes it worked for the
girl as well.

Scene 5 Was very well played by all and from the reaction of the audience brought
back memories of such encounters in the War in the Blackout.

Scene 6 Careless talk costs lives/^{etc}said with conviction. Colonel and Jane I
wasn't sure about. Jane did seem a bit at sea with this part, it needed to be
played straight dumb blond, with no reaction to the men's rude comments. The strip
tease wasn't a success.

Scene 7 This was very funny indeed - not over done, just, and the dopey
characters maintained their characteristics and were much enjoyed. Splendid
demonstration by the Sergeant of the Molotov cocktail, with genuine amazement
no one was there. More could have been made of what happened when he threw it off.
The rest of the scene with the young pilots told they were to go out tonight. Count
particularly. Maudie a good interpretation of this frustrated wife, and very
sincere plea to the CO to take good care of him. Patricia played with great sincerity.

Second half the opening chorus was so good and led in to the scene with Freddie
and Alex this worked very well and we realised how fleeting time was in the 40's.

Scene 2 Splendid scene with the yokels, several songs and dialogue which was very funny.

Scene 3 This very nearly fell apart as Dad/Lodger? choked on his Woolton pie -
fortunately you were all professional enough to keep it going. I could not hear
what the children said unfortunately. This led into the factory scene with

the endlessly monotonous work women did and how the time dragged so. We did feel
for you.

Scene 4 Voices off stage set this scene well. Admiral and Commander had some of
the best lines in the show put over with great meaning. The audience loved it.
Alice Faye, we needed more accent (as we did from all the Yanks). Some good cameos
in this scene ending with a super song by James Ellison of I left my heart at
the stage door cnoteen

Scene 5 The finale after Churchill's announcement was entirely musical and was
a fitting end to a most enjoyable evening.

This is not the usual way I write about the acting, but it seemed the best
way I could. I do hope I haven't left anything ^{of anyone} out. Please let me know if I have.

I do commend you all on your ensemble playing and for tackling something which
was difficult to stage. It just shows what can be done.

Rosanne Kirkpatrick

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