

NATIONAL OPERATIC AND DRAMATIC ASSOCIATION LONDON REGION

Society ; **Starmaker**
Production ; **"SNOOPY – The Musical"**
Date ; **Thursday 16th May 2013**
Venue ; **Oakwood Centre, Woodley**
Report by ; **Henry Hawes – NODA Representative – Area 13**

"Snoopy the Musical" was the second stage musical based on the Charles M Schulz's 'Peanuts' newspaper comic strip and which had achieved a cult status, the first having been *"Your a Good Man Charlie Brown"* in 1967. *"Snoopy the Musical"* was first performed in 1975, since when it has been performed by many professional and amateur companies. The show itself takes the form of a series of self-contained vignettes, but the overall theme is of 'Snoopy's' growing independence which makes 'Charlie Brown' feel increasingly insecure.

On Thursday 16th May 2013, I was delighted to be invited to review Starmaker's latest presentation *"Snoopy the Musical"* at the Oakwood Centre in Woodley. I have always enjoyed this show as I can sit back, relax and get that 'feel good factor', but to achieve this the show has to be well directed and cast, which this was. The cast consisted of seven young people whose ages ranged from 10 to 19 years and who were virtually on stage the whole time – quite a challenge. I was further impressed when I read in the programme that current Starmaker young members were responsible for all other aspects of the production i.e. lights, sound, make-up, props etc; giving them a good insight into what happens behind the scenes, even Front of House – Well done to all of you as everything ran smoothly with well picked up cues throughout but where oh where was the audience. This show was deserving of a 'Full House'.

Ben Lewis - (SNOOPY) – In the title role Ben gave a superlative performance as 'Charlie Brown's' pet beagle and when I read in the programme he was only ten years of age I was amazed. This young man has enormous potential. He displayed confidence and strong comedic acting which is no easy task when encased in an animal suit. This role is also demanding vocally having to sing three solos and an ensemble number which he did with ease. I was particularly impressed with his two numbers in the second act *"The Great Writer"* and *"The Big Bow-Wow – Congratulations"*.

Stephanie Ridge - (PEPPERMINT PATTY) – Stephanie gave a good interpretation of this character, being lazy and dim but at the same time is a star athlete, quite a complex character. Again here we had another member with an excellent singing voice which not only blended well in the trio *"I Know Now"* but presented her solo *"Poor Sweet Baby"* with precision and good tonal quality- Well done.

Beth Wright - (WOODSTOCK) – This is probably one of the more difficult characters to play in this show and requires it to be played by a strong actor. 'Woodstock' is 'Snoopy's' best friend and sidekick and does not speak, having to rely on mime throughout the show as well as being dressed in a fantastic bird costume. Beth presented an excellent character, her

movement and mime was of a very high standard and made the character most believable – Well done.

Lili Reakes - (SALLY BROWN) – This is ‘Charlie Brown’s’ younger sister who is madly in love with ‘Linus’. Lili gave us a true characterisation in that she takes things easy and is quite laid back in her attitude to life. Vocally here was another excellent singing voice which blended well in that well sung trio “I Know Now” – Well done.

Jacob Smith - (LINUS) – This character is ‘Lucy’s’ younger brother who endeavours to be the gang’s peacemaker and who shows his frustration because his sister is always belittling him over his ‘blanket’ which he carries with him. Jacob gave a good interpretation of this character making him believable. His movement was excellent coupled with a good singing voice with a well presented number “The Vigil” – Well done.

Austen Grigoleit - (CHARLIE BROWN) – Austin made this character a loveable loser who is taken advantage of by everybody. His best friend is his dog ‘Snoopy’ who he loves above all else and as a result ‘Snoopy’ takes full advantage of him. This was a well acted role and Austin presented a good singing voice which came across in the solo number “Where Did That Little Dog Go?” which was well sung – Well done.

Rachel Warrick-Clarke - (LUCY) – Rachel gave us a selfish, bossy girl who is very mean to ‘Charlie Brown’ and her brother ‘Linus’. She was loud, obnoxious and was exactly right for this character. Vocally Rachel came across well presenting a true singing voice which blended well in the trio “I Know Now” with ‘Sally’ and ‘Patty’ – A well presented character.

Jody Green - (DIRECTOR & CHOREOGRAPHER) – In all the years I have been reviewing shows I have seen several “*Snoopy’s*” and I can honestly say that this was one of the best I have seen and which is due to the talent and expertise of Jody. Your use of five cubes for the cast to move and stand on giving different levels, together with a practical kennel was ideal leaving an uncluttered stage. The use of projected sequences of cast members and ending with a ‘Snoopy’ cartoon projected on the back cloth during scene changes ensured excellent continuity throughout the whole performance. It had been well cast and all the right characters had been brought out, all together with attractive choreographic routines – Congratulations.

Ben Smith - (MUSICAL DIRECTOR) – Having reviewed Ben in the lead role of “*Tommy*” at the Kenton on the 17th April, I discovered another ‘string to his bow’ when I attended “*Snoopy*” and saw in the programme that he was the musical director for this show. He had certainly done an excellent job as all the youngsters had been well rehearsed in the music in both the solo and concerted numbers, making a great sound with good diction and projection.

Stage Manager & Crew – This appeared a well managed stage with swift scene changes by the crew and assisted by the cast. It was also good to see curtain up on time which appears to be a forgotten factor these days.

Lighting Design & Operation – This was a good lighting plot by **Michael Brenkley** which ensured the stage area was well lit at all times, with no ‘black spots’ and at the same time

ensured the right atmosphere was generated in the various scenes. Lighting cues were well picked up by **Hollie Marie Watts** with not a late one all evening.

Sound Design & Operation – The sound design by **John Ralls** and **Tom Horrox** had been well constructed so that at all times the words and songs of the cast was clearly heard with no distortion, and the control on the night of my visit by **Ashleigh Payne** and **Emily Grigoleit** was faultless.

Filming & Editing – The director **Jody Green** was responsible for this aspect where members of the cast had been filmed in various locations in costume and make-up giving excellent linking to the various scenes.

Animation – **Daryl Harvey** was responsible for the animation which had been well constructed giving a good ending to the various filmed extracts.

Projector Operator – This aspect was well controlled by **Ashleigh Payne** and **Emily Grigoleit** with the projections being brought in on time.

Properties – The properties used had been well researched and looked realistic.

Costumes – The costumes sourced from the Starmaker Costume Hire Department were excellent, they fitted the various characters on display, particularly the costumes for ‘Snoopy’ and ‘Woodstock’, most realistic.

Make-up – These young members who made up the make-up/hair team did a did a very good job. Hair styles had been well worked out and fitted the various characters. Make-up had been well applied so that no one was left in any doubt on the character they were displaying, particularly ‘Snoopy’ and ‘Woodstock’ – Well done.

Programme – This was an attractive programme containing all the necessary information together with good cast photographs and biographies. It also had an eye catching cover, all printed on good quality paper.

Front of House – The Front of House was under the control of **Callum Hopcutt** who carried out his duties in a pleasant manner and ensured I had a programme.

Thank you for inviting me to review your production of “*Snoopy*” and congratulations to you all for presenting such an enjoyable show.

Henry

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