



NICK BRANNAM
DIRECTOR | CHOREOGRAPHER

PRODUCTION	<i>Anything Goes</i>
COMPANY	Basingstoke Amateur Theatrical Society
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All aboard the SS American for jaunty nautical high-jinks courtesy of BATS' *Anything Goes*, just the ticket for a rainy November. Is there anything more fabulous than watching wonderfully choreographed (by Ray Jeffery and Nick Brannam) tap dancing to the strains of a classic like *It's Delovely while it's cold outside?*

Cole Porter's musical has undergone many revisions since first being performed in 1934, and director Ray Jeffery's treatment retains all of its superb musical numbers including *I Get A Kick Out of You* and, of course, the triumphant titular tune. It's another impressively ambitious piece for the society, one in which they tackle a mass choreographed tap dance full of glamour, glitz and gusto, and you'll simply find it impossible to resist tapping your feet in time with *Blow, Gabriel, Blow* and the like.

The creative vision for *Anything Goes* is consistent and accomplished; the programme is incredibly elegant, matching the staging, the out-of-this-world luxe costumes, wigs and make-up and the presence 'on deck' of the orchestra, led by musical director Neil Streeter. Visually, it will take some beating, and I adored the Busby Berkley elements of some of the numbers. It also provides opportunities for the entire cast – many of whom are new to the society – to have a little moment in the spotlight when they promenade onto the ship at the beginning, and all take their turn to move centre stage in a later number.

This caper-laden tale is led by a marvellous performance from a perfectly cast, and very dapper, Bryn Hughes as twinkle-toed and twinkly-eyed stowaway Billy Crocker. He's in love with the delicate Hope Harcourt (the appropriately sweet Emily Hemmings), but she's engaged to Lord Evelyn Oakleigh (a wonderful Anthony Mitchell).

He confesses all to glamorous nightclub singer Reno Sweeney (a gorgeous Julie Simmons, batting her impressive eyelashes and knockin' em' dead) and Public Enemy Number 13 Moonface Martin (a great Richard Bond), who plot with him to ensure that all turns out for the best. The latter invests an impressive amount of energy as Moonface – literally, at one point, as he dashes around the deck being humorously mischievous!

Also having a lot of fun is Lauren Blaxill as the moll-esque Bonnie, and she has perfected the fabulous nasal delivery of someone like Jean Hagen. And well done to those brave dancers

who had to don the slightly risqué, but cheekily perfect for the period, costumes for *Take Me Back to Manhattan*.

When things are this charming, it's possible to overlook chaotic moments and an occasional lack of vocal projection, simply by letting its infectious sparkly energy suffuse you with utter delight. Well done to all.

Joanne Mace