



NICK BRANNAM
DIRECTOR | CHOREOGRAPHER

PRODUCTION	<i>Anything Goes</i>
COMPANY	Basingstoke Amateur Theatrical Society
PUBLISHED BY	Farnham Herald
DATE OF PUBLICATION	24 th November 2012

Cole Porter's *Anything Goes* is a delight. It is slick, colourful and full of sparkling songs like *You're The Top*, *I Get a Kick Out of You*, *Let's Misbehave* and *Anything Goes* itself. It is quite a tall order for an amateur theatrical company to put on a production, but Basingstoke Amateur Theatrical Society (BATS) are giving it a glitzy go this week and next and deserve to play to packed houses at The Haymarket in Basingstoke.

The story behind *Anything Goes* is as flimsy as some of the costumes that the cast wore. Set on a ocean liner sailing from New York to London, it involves penniless stowaway Billy Crocker and his love for heiress Hope Harcourt. She, however, is engaged to Lord Evelyn Oakleigh, an English aristocrat also onboard, whom she will marry in London. Billy makes friends with nightclub singer Reno Sweeney and Public Enemy Number 13 Moonface Martin, and they help Billy as he seeks to woo Hope. Moonface is in disguise as a bishop as he is on the run from the law. There is plenty of opportunity for disguise, clowning and general mayhem, and of course, plenty of opportunity for singing and dancing too.

The choreography had been created by the director, Ray Jeffery and Nick Brannam, and it was simply stunning, matched by equally stunning dancing. The musical demands a large cast and I have no idea how they managed to remember the seemingly complex moves (I am no dancer but they looked pretty complex to me) and also to avoid bumping into each other. Sheer skill I suppose. The dancing was stronger than the singing, though that may have had more to do with technical issues than voices, and the orchestra were top notch, though sometimes drowning the singers – again I suspect this will have been sorted by the time audiences arrive.

There were some particularly fine scenes, especially *Friendship* by Billy, Reno and Moonface – Bryn Hughes, Julie Simmons and Richard Bond, all of whom played their parts with relish and panache – and *Let's Misbehave* with Reno and Sir Evelyn Oakleigh – Anthony Mitchell who fitted his role like the English tweed suit he wore.

The costumes and the set were likewise excellent and must have taken hours and hours of dedication to create. Be warned though: you will be humming the tunes for days afterwards!

Stella Wiseman