

## Productions in 2009

### Autumn 2009 - 'Hello, Dolly!'

As it must with all shows, Last Night finally came and went and so we had to say "farewell" to 'Hello Dolly!', our show for autumn 2009. A perennial favourite, and featured on TV at Christmas 2008 starring Barbra Streisand and Walter Matthau, this is the story of Mrs Dolly Levi, matchmaker supreme, who is beginning to realise that if she doesn't snare a husband for herself as well as for others life is going to pass her by. Cue all sorts of intrigue as she attempts to prise her intended away from the girl of his dreams (he thinks!) by setting her up with his store manager - it could only happen on stage! This all takes place to a "typically-Hollywood" soundtrack by Jerry Herman, with plenty of rousing songs and set-piece chorus numbers guaranteed to set toes tapping. A real feel-good show for all the family which would surely delight our audiences once more.

And so it turned out! Ticket sales were extremely good - around 90% every night - and the appreciative audiences were treated to an evening's entertainment which was second to none. From the opening bars it was clear that both the excellent band and the enthusiastic chorus were really enjoying themselves and this spirit carried over the footlights every night. Each and every principal gave a strong performance to compliment the excellent musical score and humorous libretto, and our 'Dolly' - Sarah Cook - once again gave one of those "knock 'em dead" performances for which she is rightly famous. However, perhaps the greatest cheer of the night went to Maggie Ludlow who, as Ernestina, made one of the most memorable exits ever seen on the Public Hall stage - you really had to be there to fully appreciate it!

We had managed to secure the services of Christine Mullord as Stage Director and Stella Brownsea as Musical Director for this production - the Dream Team if ever there was one! - and the extremely well-attended Preview Evening introduced us to the characters and songs, ready for the principals' auditions at the end of the month. These were the usual mixture of nerves and polished performances but the large number of candidates who put themselves forward showed a level of enthusiasm that augured well for an excellent production.

The audition panel debated long and hard over their choices but eventually came up with a wonderful cast list. Unfortunately, after rehearsing the part of Minnie Fay for several months, Kate Jackson found that a throat problem she had been enduring for some time was perhaps a little more serious than she had anticipated and so, following medical advice, she was forced to withdraw from the show. Helen Roscoe agreed to take on this role, and we all wished her (and Kate) well. Arms were then twisted to find a "volunteer" who could be prevailed upon to play the part of The Judge and so, after the dust had settled, we had the following wonderful line-up of principal players:-

Dolly Levi -	Sarah Cook	Horace Vandergelder -	David Ludlow
Cornelius Hackl -	Ian Cook	Irene Molloy -	Helen Steed
Barnaby Tucker -	Stephen Brown	Minnie Fay -	Helen Roscoe

Ambrose Kemper - Daniel Rose                      Ermengarde - Charlotte McMorran  
Ernestina - Maggie Ludlow                      Rudolf Reisenweber - Derek Monument  
The Judge - Bob Sharman

Some interesting dramatic pairings there! Congratulations to those who attracted the eye of the audition panel, but also well done to all those who put themselves forward but were unsuccessful - better luck next time! We gave a special welcome to Charlotte McMorran and Maggie Ludlow, in their first principal roles for the Society, and to Stephen Brown who joined us in an adult role after his appearance in 'The Sound of Music' in 2002.

The first chorus rehearsal on 25th May maintained the upbeat feeling, and we were full steam ahead for the next five months. While it has to be said that one or two of the choreographic sequences needed just a little polishing here and there (!), the principals really got into their characters right from the off so the scenes soon came alive with real humour and attack. Costumes were sought from far and wide and the set seemed to move from ideas to solid construction in no time at all, so with just a few weeks left before curtain up we were ready for the really hard work to begin. The full run-throughs gave us our first idea of how all the sequences go together, so we could begin to feel we were dealing with a real show and not just isolated scenes. All the cast needed to do then was learn a few more of those lines & moves because opening night was upon us before we knew it - all makes for a great show though!