

Productions in 2015

Autumn 2015 - 'The Pajama Game'

After months of rehearsals, it was a real delight to see (and hear!) the reaction of a very enthusiastic audience for the Opening Night of our autumn show 2015 - 'The Pajama Game' (and yes, it is spelled like that!). Warm applause and much laughter (in all the right places!) greeted our principals and ensemble as they gave of their best in every scene and musical number, and it continued in the same vein as audiences rapidly built up through the week. The reception we were given on Last Night was perhaps the best of all, ensuring that everyone went home on a tidal wave of enjoyment.

This show was perhaps a little more "mainstream" than our offering for the spring but provided a wonderful counterpoint to it, ensuring that we continue to bring our audiences the very best in musical theatre. Penned by Richard Adler & Jerry Ross, the original Broadway production (which opened in 1954 with choreography by Bob Fosse) was notable for being the show which propelled Shirley MacLaine to stardom when, as understudy, she filled the lead role for several months. It opened in London in 1955, starring crooner Edmund Hockridge; was made into a film in 1957 starring Doris Day, and has achieved recent success with its Broadway revival of 2006 with Harry Connick Jr. and the West End production of 2014. A lively score, witty script and big production numbers have made the show a firm favourite with societies and audiences alike over the years, so we've been really looking forward to presenting it!

The daring souls who were brave enough to attempt to knock us into shape on this occasion were the dynamic duo of Jane Zarins as Stage Director - undaunted by her spell as co-Director for 'Sweeney Todd' - and Jon Gibbs as Musical Director - similarly unscathed after battling with Sondheim for several months. They were ably supported by Dick Walter as music supervisor and, once again, by Jean Cator as choreographer. We were delighted to welcome them all back to "the team" once more.

The Preview Evening held on 11th May gave our Directors the chance to tell us all we needed to know about the show - the plot, the characters, the set, etc. - and the Read-Through gave us the opportunity to play some of the characters ourselves and really explore the libretto (that's "the words"!). Next up was a "Chorus/Movement Workshop", where we all exhausted ourselves after being given a thorough workout, and two audition rehearsals before we held the Principals' Auditions themselves at Beccles Public Hall on 1st & 3rd of June. These gave the Audition Panel a difficult job, as many excellent performances were seen, but in the end a strong cast was chosen - just for once, all the major roles were filled at audition! The minor roles were then assigned by the production team, mainly from those who had been unsuccessful at audition, and so those who were wowing us with their flannelette one'sies were:-

Sid Sorokin - Tom McGee	Ian Cook	Babe Williams - Emily Holt	Vernon Hines -
Gladys Hotchkiss - Mae Weidenbaker -	Sarah Cook Jayne Andrew	Prez Rubenstein -	Jason Lambert
Mabel Ellis - Gary Watson	Debbie Lambert	Myron Hasler - Martin Clarke	Max Weiler -
Pop Williams - Helen Roscoe	Steve Holmes	Brenda Hetch - Helen Watson	Poopsie Freiburger -
Wallace Elmer - Markowitz -	Baden Aldridge John Hammond	Dillon Marks - Tom Holt	Charley
Sandra Rosen - Jeremy Watts	Jenni Newman	Virginia Katz - Sam Fennelly	Joe Hayworth -
Carmen O'Rourke -	Kate Jackson		

Our first full rehearsal was on 8th June at Quaker Hall, Beccles, when the massed ranks of potential chorus members were able to turn up and greet the principals. We had a bit of a sing-through to start things off, but we soon got well on our way with the scene-setting (and more especially the choreography!) for both Acts taxing our stage skills. It was then time to put all the sections together, thus revealing which bits had been missed out in the rush! We then transferred to the Public Hall (which was still a bit of a building site!) so we could finally stagger through several full runs of the whole show. There was then a lot of "sorting out of the detail", shall we say, but by the time the wonderful stage set was fully built we all had great confidence in the final result. This was not misplaced, as it has been a great show week for cast and audiences alike!