
Jane Austen's tale of manners, marriage and money has been filmed and staged aplenty, but sung? Only, apparently, as a couple of long ago and long-forgotten flops.

Could the cast portray early 19th century English society, with all its repressed emotions and straight laces, while delivering a show required to take a sidelong, humorous look at those very things in order to entertain?

ROS likes a challenge, and as a company with a great depth of talent it was always going to give its American guests a run for their money.

While not a triumph, “P&P” looked good and, at times, sounded great, directed by Helen Bailey, with Robert Wicks as musical director and the story by Josie Brown.

The plot, based on Austen’s 1813 romantic novel, follows the Bennets – five daughters and their long-suffering parents. Mother wants them all married well, father just wants a quiet life.

Swerve the cads, wed the well filled breeches – you know the score.

Along comes the cool, prideful Mr Darcy, and after mishap and misunderstanding, his
girl eventually gets him, and his money, of course.

Darcy (Matthew Ralph) was a strong leading man, stiffly formal as the role requires and powerful in the solos.

Becky Miles' Elizabeth was sweetly assured, and although playing a woman of greater age, she managed to convince in the moments when she needed to be the dominant sister.

The characterisation that befits the era sometimes led to a rather static stage when performers were isolated. Crowd scenes worked well, duets and small group numbers were fine, but some of the soloing was a little planted, a notable exception being the wonderful Angela Evans as Lady Catherine De Bourgh, the standout performance of the night.

Perhaps there was a little too much to grapple with? Rita Abrams's lyrics are hellishly clever, sassy American showtune stuff that puns on Austen and Dickens, alliterates and rhymes in staccato.

The double Emmy-award-winning writer has composed some very catchy numbers, some that could go on to be great.

OK, it is too long – at about two hours and 45 minutes it could do with a wimple cut – and the sets, while lovely, took an awful lot of changing, which sapped the momentum. But the clever blending of ballad, ditty, chorus and solo, pathos and prancing made for an enjoyable evening.

Peter O'Regan got laughs for his mincing minister, Mr Collins, and showed excellent acting-while-singing skills.

Pam Bailey was a fine, flustered Mrs Bennet, and Caroline Clark played a powerful foil to Miles in the role of Jane Bennet. Their humorous duet, A Husband, was one of the highlights of the night.

The newly refurbished Winston Churchill Hall in Ruislip was a fitting venue for a world first, and ROS did not disappoint – worthy producers of the premiere of a show which the two writers hope will go on to great things.

Colet Court School in Barnes was as anonymous as the WCH when, in 1968, two likely lads by the name of Lloyd Webber and Rice were commissioned to write a school production about a young Jewish boy and his coat of many colours. Whatever happened to that, I wonder?

Pride and Prejudice: The Musical and Ruislip Operatic Society – hope you saw it here first, folks!