

"THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK"

The Diary of Anne Frank is a very emotive subject, but I found it intriguing to actually witness the interaction of the different people, their relationships and prejudices, as previously I had only read the Diaries, but this brought them vividly to life.

The set was a masterpiece from Alan Goss – built by Rep members – it encompassed the whole of the attic the Franks and their friends were confined in – with an upstairs, representation of the separate rooms, and doors to downstairs and the WC – all of which gave the cast flow of movement, but created the feeling of a small, over-populated space for the audience, that really gave us an idea of how awful it must have been.

Lighting designed by Jacob Shooter created the right feeling throughout, and the sound effects were excellent – with evocative music. All enhancing the characters and the action. A very good production technically.

It was nice to see some new faces, both younger and older people – along with the more experienced actors. I felt that it took the newer members a little while to really get into their characters, but when they did they gave very good performances. This applied to Debbie Chesham as Margot, Graham Read as Mr Kraler and Jessica Lacey as Miep, along with Graham Thomas as Mr Dussell, a more mature returning actor.

The cast was headed up by Stephanie Overington as Anne – such a lovely actor, all the naivety, intensity and charm of the young Anne shone through, with great understanding of the lib. A lively and empathetic performance creating good contrasts with the other actors.

Hearing her diaries read out loud really brought them to life, I'm sure that had Anne lived she would have made a living out of writing in some form – as she had a good turn of phrase, and actually referred to it in one entry, she also referred to 'my children' which I found very sad.

Alan Goss created a gentle believable Otto Frank, a family man trying to do the best for his family. The marked difference between Otto before they were taken by the Germans and when he came back after the war was extremely good, I could feel his anguish.

The relationship with Susan Young as his wife Edith was natural, and I really felt for her when Anne rejected her mother because she didn't think she understood her. Susan always has a good understanding of a part, and created a caring woman concerned for her family, and when she finally snapped it was very telling.

Then we had Debbie Chesham as the quieter more sensible Margot, a good foil to Anne, and nicely performed. A little more projection at the outset was needed, but as the play went on and Debbie gained confidence there was a definite uplift. A sensitive portrayal.

The other young person in the attic was played by Adam Butcher – we got the shyness of Peter at the outset, but over time you could see his character was getting more relaxed with Anne in particular – until they came to an understanding that

created a relationship – nicely done. A small note, it was a shame the cat was so stiff, it would have been nice to have had a more flexible toy for realism!!

Peter's parents were very real – arguing and bullying each other and Peter – I enjoyed the fieryness of Sue Jones and Adam Croft as Mr and Mrs Van Daan, they gave a good contrast to the quiet and more dignified partnership of the Franks. I felt very sorry for Peter having to put up with such parents, so they both obviously did a very good job for me to feel that way!

Graham Thomas as Mr Dussell the dentist, reacted well to his enforced incarceration, showing contempt but acceptance of the circumstances, and reacting with typical Jewish fervour.

Jessica Lacey created another dimension as Miep – I got the feel of the debt they all owed to her. At times I felt she was a little too light in her manner, although I appreciate she was endeavouring to keep their spirits up, and she certainly looked the part. Very good hairdo!

Graham Read as Mr Kraler the other partner in keeping the attic's secret, again started slowly, but gained confidence, and I could really see the character shining through when he was imparting the bad news about the thief – well done.

I thought the costumes were very in keeping with the characters, and loved the fact that the cast changed their clothes on stage during other action, to keep the thread running seamlessly – and also the fact that everyone kept their individual characters going the whole time, even when they were not directly involved in the action.

A good production on the whole, with some amusing moments interspersed with the more serious matters. I liked the bows – they complemented the play.

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