

"Lest We Forget"

Lest We Forget proved to be a fitting tribute to WW1, one which had humour and poignancy interwoven, along with good performances from a strong cast.

The set worked really well, good design from Alan Goss, along with the back projections from Craig Fisher showing beautiful pictures of the Yorkshire dales, along with more gritty detail of the trenches and other war pictures, the latter in black & white or sepia tint, the former in colour, which negated the need for backdrops and extensive scenery, giving a smooth flow of action throughout.

I liked the effects that were accomplished with lighting, and the projection of poppies along the side walls was beautiful, as were the strings of fairy lights in the roof, to depict the Christmas when soldiers from both sides sang together and played football – both very moving moments.

This was very much an ensemble piece, with certain high points, but overall I felt everyone stepped up to the plate, to give us a well-integrated production, with excellent character relationships.

I understand that Angela Goss put the piece together and also directed it – and as usual with one of her productions, there were thoughtful and insightful nuances, with plenty of contrasts and dimensions, so that despite the heat, we were gripped by what was going on, and sharing in the ups and downs of the life of Yorkshire folk prior to and during WW1.

We really got the sense of rural Yorkshire, and the feelings of the young (and not so young) men joining up, and the awareness of what it might mean. The music with Chris Young as MD, also gave an evocative touch, and the use of some songs we might not have heard before was good, but we also had those that we were familiar with and could sing along to.

I particularly liked the 'Ticket' song from Liz Blower as Marie Lloyd, she gave it lots of punch and joie de vivre, just as I imagined it would be. I also liked the monologue from Barry Pain as Alfred Bottomley, again not a familiar one.

I loved Kim Albone's solo - there was depth and warmth, conversant with the woman she depicted.

Sam Rowland gave us a very telling portrayal of William McBride, showing him first as a young carefree man, marrying his sweetheart Mary – a lovely portrayal by Grace Reinhold-Gittins, and then showing his confusion when confronted with everyone telling him he ought to join up. Sam's portrayal and the relationship between him and Mary was very real and alive. It was a quirk of fate that William had to die! However, it led to the use of a lovely number started very quietly and beautifully by Mary and Anne his mother (played by Susan Young), building into a full cast number which was lovely.

I thought the two younger ladies in the cast Grace Reinhold-Gittins and Stephanie Overington (as Rose) both gave excellent performances, they were charming, and emotive, showing every side of their characters – they shone for me.

I also liked Anthony Bird as Fred – his relationship with Rose was touching and again very real – I just felt that his physical injuries didn't appear to be as disfiguring as was intimated – although the scene in the hospital was very touching.

Phil Baker injected some different energy in the varying parts he played – and also some well-considered humour, which lifted the mood.

I liked the gentle singing of the men in the trenches, and particularly liked Dave Hillman's a capella number, it created a different ambience, and was well sung.

Barbara Morton again brought her pure voice to Keep the Home Fires Burning, which was another musical high.

The song towards the end when the men and ladies were singing different songs at the same time blended well, and was a different sound that lifted the proceedings.

So, all in all I thoroughly enjoyed the production, it was an evocative and inspiring vehicle, brought to life by the cast, the music, the lighting and effects, which all came together to give us, the audience, some laughs, some tears and above all a certain appreciation of the sacrifice the people of the time made.

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