

"THE RISE & FALL OF LITTLE VOICE"

Once again the Rep gave us an impeccable production, with good performances from a diverse cast. As is always the case with an Alan Goss production, there is meticulous attention to detail, however there was one small point that didn't ring entirely true – Mari went out in underwear with a coat, and came back fully dressed – without a discernible passing of time. It was only as the dialogue started that we became aware that it was a different time. This is probably nit picking, but small things take on big proportions when we only expect the best from a company!

I must compliment Mr Goss on his set – getting a whole house including an upstairs bedroom, on the Little Theatre stage was a feat in itself – but it all worked extremely well, allowing the characters plenty of room to move around freely. The set was also very well-dressed, it looked exactly as you'd expect it to look for a house belonging to the type of person in the era!!

Lighting was good, very imaginative for the club and at the end for the fire, and also the aftermath of the fire, subtle but specific enough to show us the cast and their varying degrees of grief.

So, let us now look at the cast – Kate John played Little Voice, I liked what she did with the part, and although she spoke quietly it was always audible, and the contrast to when she sang was excellent.... and what a voice, it lent itself well to the music and whilst not an outright impression Kate got the essence of the singers well, along with mannerisms, so that there was no doubt who they were meant to be. Very well done. I liked Kate and the way she interpreted the character, you could identify with how she became how she was, and her relationship with her mother. She got the shy withdrawn nature of the girl, along with her passion for music.

Mari the mother was a typical loud-mouthed Northern woman of the time, loose morals and a propensity to drink. Very stereotypical, but a different role for Angela Goss, and one she really got into. We are used to seeing Angela in more refined roles, so this was a chance for her to really let rip – which she did! Costumes were also very in keeping with the type of woman we were looking at. I loved her genuine hurt at the thought that Ray was more interested in her daughter for the monetary value she could provide, than anything Mari could do for him.

Ray Say, Mari's one time boyfriend and wannabee entrepreneur, was played with a certain rather sleazy style by Joe Butcher – he certainly looked the part with his blonde coifed hair. I particularly liked his rendition of the Roy Orbison song It's Over – so much restrained passion and meaning, a superb moment in time that was very emotive.

Susan Young played Sadie, Mari's down-trodden long time friend, a super part which Susan pulled off really well. Even the wig helped the general rather vacant air of the woman, which was just so good, and a marvellous contrast to Mari.

Josh Thompson played Mr Boo, the nightclub owner – Josh turns up so regularly that you'd think you'd get used to him, but he turned in yet another character, the rough round the edges Northern club owner, who thinks he's the bee's knees, getting Ray and LV dancing to his tune. Liked the shoes by the way Josh, and the portrayal was good as well!

Dave Hillman played the small part of the phone engineer, but I thought he got the accent well – and also showed some animation in his portrayal.

Finally, we had newcomer to the Rep, Joe Hawkins, playing the introverted Billy, who took a shine to LV and hopefully rescued her in more ways than one. Joe got the reticence and natural shyness of the lad well, showing animation when talking about his lights, as LV did when talking about her dad and music – so a well-matched couple. I liked their relationship, awkward but true.

I thought the bows were a little unimaginative, with those lovely levels of the set, there could have been something a little more interesting.

There was real emotion to be found in the script, which the cast brought out well, it wasn't entirely perfect for me – but it came fairly close, and there wasn't a weak link in the cast. Act 2 seemed to have more pace and intent than Act 1, and I found it gripped me more – there were also some lovely contrasts between the calm and the storm of both situations and characters, which brought up the interest levels, and made it a production that I enjoyed.

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