

STAINES MUSICAL THEATRE GROUP

'9 to 5 the Musical' – JUNE 2024

After a workshop in New York '9 to 5' had its first brief outing before being presented to the industry in 2007. It went to Los Angeles for a short time in 2008 and New York in 2009. In 2012 and 2013 it had a UK tour and received mixed reviews such as 'a feminist revenge story' and 'an over inflated whoopee cushion' and 'goofily entertaining'. Fortunately attitudes have changed somewhat but the sexist and discriminatory remarks are sadly still present 40 years later.

Because of the horrendous traffic jams on just about every road from Cobham to the Village Hall in Chertsey, my guest and I arrived a few minutes into the opening number, but as Sharon kindly sent me a videoclip later I am able to report on the show from start to finish.

Projections were used for some scenes and that worked well. The main office (Bullpen) was set quickly with the desks on wheels and Franklin Hart Junior's office was smartly furnished with bookcases and an appropriate desk.

The opening number revealed the cast in night clothes, a bed and ticking down clock. This set the scene for the daily rush to get ready for the journey to work and then on dance movement in that number and the cast were clearly well-rehearsed. It made for a strong opening and culminated in an aisle through which Judy made her appearance on her first day at work.

Lucy Curtis portrayed the shy, untrained Judy splendidly.

An excellent performance from Violet Newstead as the more senior, experienced woman who helped Judy to settle into the job and who was constantly being overlooked for promotion by Hart Junior.

Judy in turn befriended Doralee Rhodes, ostracised by the other women as they believed she was having an affair with the boss. It was easy to see why – she was glamorous and feisty- but in essence she was a simple, good hearted country girl and not in the slightest bit interested in Hart.

Fay Etson was excellent in the role. She looked the part and had just the right type of accent.

It was great to see their friendship develop and the three women worked brilliantly together – a strong team in both the story and their stage abilities. The cannabis inspired dreams were very entertaining.

Dan gave a good performance as the lecherous, arrogant, overbearing Franklin Hart Jnr and was the epitome of a man in a position of authority who uses it to get what he wants – dominance – to benefit him in one way or another!

The only woman who finds Hart's power attractive is Roz. She is so besotted that her fantasies get the better of her in a telling rendition of 'Heart to Hart'. She played the part strongly.

Emma's younger admirer Joe was securely played by Wesley Wooden.

Bob Franck made a laid-back Dwayne and I think it was he who played the cameo role of Tinsworthy too? If so then the change in his appearance was most effective and in his white suit he was convincing as the CEO.

The small role of Missy Hart was ideally presented by Charlotte Benton.

Costumes for the special numbers were good, striking and colourful, but the costumes for the ladies at the opening were rather drab colours and perhaps Emma should have stood out a little more as the senior secretary.

However the Second Act ones were much brighter and attractive so maybe it was intentional so show the difference in the office atmosphere once Hart was out of the way.

The choreography was set at a reasonable level so that the whole cast could take part and they did so most ably. One of the main dancers stood apart from the others and I feel deserves a mention She smiled constantly and her movements were practised and elegant. I think it was Jo Conlan.

Finales of both acts were super.

Lighting and sound were good but for one of the scenes toward the end of the show the back of the stage would have benefitted from more light.

The musical content is rhythmical and catchy and I was trying not to sing along with the well known '9 to 5'! Guy Bunce and his musicians were very good and the volume was controlled.

Props and furniture were suitable for the era and the back stage crew were commendable. There were so many scene changes and all accomplished quietly and efficiently. Despite this the first act was rather a long one.

Sharon's directorial debut for SMTG was a sound one, and with Gail's assistance, together they produced an enjoyable and entertaining show.

Your programme contains all of the necessary information but I did find the printing - after the list of musical numbers - too small to read easily.

Thank you for inviting me to see '9 to 5 the Musical' and for your hospitality. My guest and I had a most enjoyable evening.

Have a wonderful Summer and I'll see you at the pantomime --- oh yes I will!!

E. Gloria Smith .

NODA South East Regional Representative – District 12

