



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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Supporting live theatre in South Australia

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CHICAGO

Murray Bridge Players and Singers

Murray Bridge Town Hall

Until November 25

Review by Richard Manning

Firstly if you're reading this review you can't go to the show. Tonight (Saturday 25 November 2017) is the last show. With the popularity of this show every performance has been a sell out or near sellout. So I guess I'm about to tell you what you missed.

I'll sum up: first, the whole cast from principals to chorus were well-rehearsed and knew their stuff. They were confident and delivered the audience a great performance. The band, on stage throughout and very much part of the show, were equally well rehearsed and, apart from a couple of cold brass instruments early, were spot on. Musical director Christine Hodgen did a great job with the band and the vocal quality of the cast.

I have to bring costuming in right at the top. Wow! Beautifully conceived and executed and entirely appropriate at every point of the show. To all involved, well done. The set was simple, clever, and again gave the feel of a Chicago jazz club. Keeping it simple it meant scene changes were quick and effective.

The principal cast did all that rehearsal and preparation proud. Starting with Emma Love (Velma Kelly) and Peta Davis (Roxie Hart). Emma's powerful voice and sassy performance brought the character of Velma Kelly out perfectly. Diction and good balance of sound with the band meant every word of Emma's performance was easily heard. The character of Velma Kelly sets the scene for the show and the opening numbers set the scene for a great show to come.

This was Davis's first time in a principal role. It did show in the slight lack of confidence in delivery of spoken lines but that's a very minor niggle in what was otherwise an excellent performance. In fact that little hint of lack of confidence helped Roxie's character as the Jazz wannabe. Her portrayal of the cocky Roxie once she'd pushed Velma into the shadows was excellent.

The performers including Emma Love who delivered the Cell Block Tango; Tenille Schulz, Lauren Gibbs, Madelaine Farley, Narelle Steffan and Abby McIntosh were superb. Abby McIntosh delivered very convincing Hungarian as the singer of the "Uh Uh" part. Well done all.

Kurt Miegel as Billy Flynn the brassy defense lawyer, who only did his job for "love" and \$5000, was great. Maybe not entirely convincing but certainly very believable and performed his numbers well.

Worthy of a review by himself was Brendan Watts as Amos Hart. Amos's character is one full of pathos and yet humour. His unswerving love of Roxie and his lack of wit to sense he was being manipulated were all delivered in full by Brendan. A minor role but one of significance – and which brought among the loudest applause at the end of the show.

Cassie Brion as Mama Morton gave a great performance with a powerful voice befitting the part. Cassie made the role her own making any comparison to the film version irrelevant. Joanne Ahrens did the same in her role of Mary Sunshine and gave us her own style in a good performance.



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The choreography was entirely appropriate and still left the cast breath to sing. It's an easy trap to give too much to the dance moves and leave the singers breathless. It did its job in every way.

Finally the directing team of Trent Baker, Marie Red and Robyn Bates gave us a great show. Putting their mark on it and showing a great eye for detail. Brilliant job.

Murray Bridge Players and Singers continue to deliver great shows that deserve their great audiences and they do that with the talent pool of a country town. I can sadly say if you didn't see "Chicago" you missed a great show.