



# Adelaide Theatre Guide

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## **FIDDLER ON THE ROOF**

### **Therry Dramatic Society**

The Arts Theatre

Until 17 of June 2017

Review by Chris Eaton

I was a little underwhelmed by Therry's choice of Fiddler as their annual musical treat. After bravely venturing with a South Australian premiere of "Big Fish" in 2016, I hoped for similar bravery in 2017. In hindsight, witnessing the sublime efforts of Director Norm Caddick, Musical Director Peter Johns, Choreographer Kerry Hauber and their cast I feel a tad ashamed – for their Fiddler, Therry's Fiddler is the epitome of classic musicals done right.

Let's be honest, though – with Joseph Stein's book and music by Jerry Bock, lyrics by Sheldon Harnick you'd have to be a ham-fisted, tone deaf, anti-Semite to stage a bad production of Fiddler. However, it takes superlative dedication to tell the story as well as the cast, led by David Gauci as Tevye did last night.

The show, as it should (to be a success) belongs to Gauci. It would be misleading to talk about his performance as a mere portrayal; Gauci's Tevye is deeper than that. It appears effortless, it is genuine, authentic and (though it feels odd to describe) human. Gauci never betrays the presumably considerable effort involved to extract the level of engagement that is on show. Yes, the jokes are all there – deliciously timed – and his singing voice is warm and rich, meeting the challenges of the music; but the performance has an elusive quality that can't easily be summated, much less unpicked. Do see it for yourself, community and professional leading men take note.

The performances of the supporting cast and the large and particularly busy chorus don't seem incongruous with Gauci's performance, more encouraged and lifted by it. Anne Doherty as Tevye's wife Golde, Georgia Broomhall as Tzeitel, Ruby Pinkerton as Hodel and Eloise Quinn-Valentine as Chava make up the heart of the show. The three sisters "Matchmaker" is a jaunty highlight in the first act and the interplay between Pinkerton and Gauci during her beautifully sung "Far From the Home I Love" is genuine and moving.

Caddick's hand is notable in the pace that the show keeps, ensuring that the epic first act doesn't stretch too long, whilst ensuring that elements of the dialogue are heard and absorbed, rather than run over. Choreography by Hauber is excellent mainly for the polish that is evident, particularly by the chorus in "The Dream". Peter Johns runs a tight ship musically both on stage and in the pit, and commendation is worthy for the numerous solo efforts of the band (particularly Robert Wallace on violin) in what is a fitting but notably sparse orchestration. Lighting by Jason Groves is of note too, subtly enhancing the emotions in certain scenes and working with the careful scenic artistry of Nick Spottiswoode.

Despite edging close to perfection there are a couple of minor blemishes. First, is the overly bright costuming of Lee Cook in the titular role, looking more suited to a St Patricks Day parade. Second is the presence of too much ham from a member of the male ensemble and finally the seemingly modern satchel of Hodel's suitor Perchik, played by Nathan Quadrio. These are however minor quibbles in what is a show of the highest order. Get a ticket if you can.