



# Adelaide Theatre Guide

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Supporting live theatre in South Australia

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## ANYTHING GOES

### Marie Clark Musical Theatre

Arts Theatre

Until 1 June

Review by Chris Eaton

If you need a pick-me-up, a laugh or just want something to tap your toes to (and you'll have to excuse the odd nautical pun in this review) then set sail for Marie Clark's "Anything Goes". Though the production is not without its barnacles, the highlights more than compensate for the low points. The beloved (yet rarely performed) musical is a revival version of the 1934 Cole Porter musical with book by P.G. Wodehouse (et al.) and, like the original, is a fluffy, farcical romp with dancing dames, mistaken identities, offended upper class cabin dwellers – along with a gangster and his moll.

Without doubt the star of the show is Alana Shepherdson as famed nightclub singer Reno Sweeney. A genuine triple threat, with a great voice and dancing to match, Shepherdson rightly owns the stage, with presence, power and grace. She lifts the performances of the performers around her and deftly handles the text and characterisation of the part. Similar plaudits go to the stellar orchestra, whose sound under the musical direction of Mark Stefanoff was simply a joy to hear and would not be out of place in the pit of the Festival Theatre. The third major highlight is the choreography by Rosanna Commisso which, while shining in the group numbers, has its real value in the frequent duets and smaller pieces. Her choreography is enjoyable, refreshingly imaginative and excellently executed by the lead characters and the dancing ensemble. These three elements are genuinely worth your admission ticket.

However, the pace of the opening night (under the direction of Michael Butler) was too fast; to the show's detriment. As such, those unfamiliar with the text may have found the action hard to follow, hampered further by poor diction in places – perhaps caused by the pace. As a result the show therefore lost some of the laughs from the excellent book that could have been drawn out with more delicate handling. Characterisation of many of the characters also showed a lack of direction, with many characters uneven. Additionally the use of plush animals rather than live animals jars the action and is a confusing choice, given that the animals are mainly carried.

William Richards is boundlessly energetic, dances excellently and is commended for giving the part of Billy Crocker his best effort. Unfortunately, his voice is ill suited to the part and he lacks the charisma to make the most of his dialogue as the charming, suave Billy. His duet with Reno in "You're the Top" is a highlight; however, perhaps due to the visual similarity in age with Shepherdson, the song comes across as if he is in love with Reno, rather than bucking up the confidence of a person he only sees as a friend.

Supporting Shepherdson and Richards, Evelyn Oakleigh is very well played by Christopher Berton. Hope Harcourt, Oakleigh's fiancée and Billy's love interest, played by Maya Miller, does well with what is a very underwritten and two-dimensional role. Buddy Dawson is an enjoyable Moonface Martin, but needs tighter direction to add light and shade to his portrayal, as well as needing to trim his frenetic pace. Brooke Washusen as Erma ably draws the laughs but needs to observe her diction, particularly in her otherwise enjoyable rendition of "Buddy, Beware".

The set, designed by the director along with Ben Todd and Helen Wheadon was workable, plain but pleasant. However, it and much of the stage action wasn't particularly aided by the lighting, designed by Mike Phillips with the heavy pink wash used a few times being too strong from this reviewer's vantage point.



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As said, the several lows, are significantly outweighed by the highs and your (nautical) mileage may vary. The receptive opening night audience loved it and several even stood at the curtain to applaud the enthusiastic cast.