



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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DUSTY: THE ORIGINAL POP DIVA!

Northern Light Theatre Company

Shedley Theatre
Until 13 Apr 2019

Review by Anthony Vawser

The popularity of biographical/jukebox musicals has recently been confirmed with a vengeance by the phenomenal cinematic success of "Bohemian Rhapsody". Northern Light, and director Gordon Combes, deserve equivalent rewards and plaudits for their production of "Dusty".

Mary O'Brien was the name given by her parents to the girl we now know as Dusty Springfield, and this show (focusing both on her distinguished singing career and challenging personal life) utilises the clever device of having young Mary not only show us how and where Dusty started out in life, but also continuing to comment on the action, contrasting Dusty's increasing experience with Mary's eternal innocence.

It is difficult to imagine anyone handling the demands of this leading role better than Robyn Brookes does. Absolutely credible as both a famed vocal powerhouse and a human being with insecurities, Brookes carries the show quite superbly. Amie Graham is well-cast and engaging as Dusty's younger self.

Bianca Levai is another marvellous asset in the role of Reno, with a rousing voice and real stage presence. Tom Adams and Nadine Wood make a memorable and likeable pair of compatriots for Dusty in her early days, while Amanda Sharp is a spot-on standout during a brief appearance playing gossip columnist Jean Rook.

An eclectic musical menu is one of the special pleasures of a show that tasks itself with surveying a career as varied as Dusty Springfield's, but that eclecticism is also one of the challenges to be faced by any company in finding the musicians and singers to successfully cope with all of the different styles and sounds that must be served up. Happily, MD Danielle Pedler leads a ten-piece ensemble that provides this show with all the kick and groove required for the upbeat numbers, as well as the soul and poignancy conveyed in Dusty's more vulnerable moments. Vocal harmonies are beautifully handled by the ensemble.

Sue Pole's choreography adds just the right touch of movement for the music and time periods being depicted. Combes' set design keeps things appropriately simple but usefully versatile and with striking touches that leave their mark. Ann Humphries has met the challenge of outfitting the cast in a wide range of clothes that embody a fairly long timeline and a number of changes in fashion; mention should also be made of Chris Bussey for wigs.

It was pleasing to observe that the Shedley crowd this reviewer sat in the midst of was both sizeable and appreciative; hopefully the sign of a healthy and deserved success for a show that delivers such a strong slice of musical/biographical entertainment.