



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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Supporting live theatre in South Australia

PO Box 738
MODBURY SA 5092

info@theatreguide.com.au
ABN : 93 297 960 525

MAMMA MIA!

Northern Light Theatre Company

Shedley Theatre

Until 1st May 2021

Review by Lance Jones

We all understand how tough things were during 2020, and none more so than our beloved theatre companies. Imagine rehearsing for a show, constructing the sets, bumping into the theatre and even performing a dress rehearsal, and then having to cancel the season due to Covid lockdowns. This was a sad reality for the Northern Light Theatre Company's "Mamma Mia!" last year. That's why the Adelaide Theatre community rejoiced when they announced on their website "here we go again!" NLTC are back with the 2021 season of the hit ABBA musical.

You would have had to have spent the last three years in a cupboard if you hadn't heard of the numerous performances of this catchy ABBA-based musical in Adelaide. If anything, the unfortunate Covid delay helped in this regard. Providence had provided enough space between productions to allow this one to flourish on its own merits without the inevitable comparisons – and flourish it did. Playing to full or near full houses every performance, the group from The North has done this show proud.

The two main leading characters of the mother and daughter duo were played by ATG Award winning Robyn Brookes as "Donna" and Alana Shepherdson as "Sophie". Both are consummate performers with tons of stage experience that showed each time they walked in from behind the legs. Paula Cooney was amusing in her role as the husband-consuming Tanya. However, the standout performance from the female leads was definitely Michelle Davy's hilarious interpretation of the slightly clumsy but always affable "Rosie". She had the audience in fits several times with her faux-mistakes and genuinely likable nature. It was a wonderful tutorial in comedic timing that everybody enjoyed.

The three "dads" made an interesting trio, and not just because their roles are written that way. Gavin Cianci as "Sam" looked great in a suit and his American accent was perfect. Angus Smith gave the role of "Harry" a bit of the "dorky English twit" that was predictable but amusing, nonetheless. Ben Kempster played the role of "Bill" exactly as intended, with a larrikin edge any Australian can relate to. The male leads were rounded out by the cheesy moustache-wearing Ray Cullen as "Sky", demonstrating, amongst other things, how interesting his hair was. I guess you had to be there.

However, the standout male performance for the night was Mike Lapot's version of "Pepper". It's not every day you get to see a solo tap routine by someone wearing flippers. Mike pulled it off remarkably well, thoroughly deserving the enthusiastic applause that followed.

The music was played by a small but very skilled band directed by Peter Johns. Their technical performing ability was beyond doubt, however, the sound at times was very thin, dampening down the energy and detracting from the performance. The questionable sound balance also affected the energy levels of the ensemble singing at times. The choreography was a dichotomous affair, with some brilliant exhibitions being intermingled with some rather pedestrian ensemble movements. The "dream sequence" could have been so much more than it was, representing an opportunity lost by having cast members simply "walking about" the stage. The use of random "rich people" flaunting themselves provocatively in front of the cast during "Money Money Money" simply did not work. At times, the leads mistimed their underscores at the start of some of the numbers. Add to this the uber-exciting and well-presented ensemble movements



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during the finale numbers, together with the wonderfully executed harmonies and amusing appearances during the title song, and you have a crashing mix of the monumental with the mediocre.

Yet, live theatre is back, and the support and sense of community is real and warming. Northern Light Theatre Company's wonderfully entertaining production of "Mama Mia!" showed us all just how tight knit the musical theatre community of Adelaide really is. Even the cast of Adelaide's previous production of the "Mamma Mia!" turned up en masse to show their support and love, instigating the standing ovation at the end of the performance. It was simply beautiful to watch.

The Northern Light Theatre Company have experienced more than a year of waiting. They have endured heartache and disappointment right at the very time they should have been feeling excitement and anticipation. They pulled down, packed up, waited and then started all over again. Congratulations, Northern Light Theatre Company, for a stellar performance, both on stage and off.

It was definitely worth the wait!