

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF

The Metropolitan Musical Company

Arts Theatre, 53 Angas Street, Adelaide

Until 14 May

Review by Rod Lewis

Under Max Rayner's capable direction, it is easy to understand why Joseph Stein's heartfelt story is considered by some to be "one of the greatest musicals of all time".

With Jerry Bocks memorable tunes and Sheldon Harnick's lyrics, this is the origin of Gwen Stefano's recent hit, albeit a very different version! "If I Were A Rich Man" is just one of the catchy numbers to be found among many, and Robin Schmelzkopf brings the comedy to the fore in an outstanding rendition.

Fiddler is the tale of Tevye, a traditional Jewish man adapting to a world without tradition in the town of Anatevka, Russia, 1905. It is often said that this is a one-man show with support actors and Schmelzkopf certainly makes it his own in the central role. While looking too young for the part he nonetheless leads a relatively good ensemble to success.

Jenny Scarce-Tolley is delightful as Tevye's wife Golde, but her badly applied make-up was very distracting on opening night.

Lyn Crowther was a perfect match for the role of the Matchmaker, finding laughs in almost every gesture, but James Antonas failed to express the determination and drive of the radical Perchik.

Carolyn Lockett, Antonio Cirocco, Frank Cwierniak and Renie Walker also stood out in their respective roles. Throughout the cast, accents cause a regular problem, and in the case of Kirilie Blythman, appalling projection meant that she is often only heard during her songs.

The chorus sounds good but lacked the subtlety and emotion needed to carry off the sweeter songs, particularly "Sunrise, Sunset" and "Anatevka". Musical Director Rodney Hrvatin does an otherwise excellent job however.

Carmel Vistoli outdoes herself with the lively dances but sadly, an overcrowded stage sometimes makes the routines look clumsy.

Ole Wiebkin's practical set design allows the play to segue smoothly between the multiple scenes. While not without its faults, Fiddler is a stellar production overall with many of the first night glitches sure to be fixed quickly.