

TOM JONES

Marie Clark Musical Theatre

The Arts Theatre
Until May 28

Review by Nikki Gaertner

Traditionalists will likely be pleased with this light operetta that is a very different offering to Marie Clark's last show of "Man of La Mancha".

The story revolves around the title character, born of unknown parents and raised by the well-off Mr Allworthy (Philip Lineton). Tom grows into a young man with the best of intentions, but manages to always appear the source of all sorts of trouble.

The show is narrated by the author of the novel, Henry Fielding (Michael McKinley). McKinley provides some context to a number of scenes making the show very easy to follow. His delivery was serious in some parts and humorous in others.

Njal Venning portrays the hero Tom Jones as a kind hearted larrikin, and sings to his full capacity in every number.

Opposite him, Heather Crawford is love interest and leading lady Sophia Western. Crawford acts the part well, but seemed a little hesitant with some of her singing early in the show. She did, however, perfectly execute the number "Which Is My Own True Self?" in the third act.

A standout of the supporting cast is Helen Lengyel as Sophia's closest friend, Honour. Her cheerful rendition of "As All the Maids" was entertaining and pleasing.

The chorus was enthusiastic, though difficult to understand in some numbers, and Kym Clark's orchestra sounded pleasantly tuneful.

The costumes were bright and colourful and suited to the era. But more could have been done to the men's wigs to make them look less like sheepskins and more like the wigs of the period.

Both the lighting and set were rather plain for the first act, however those used in the second and third were very nicely designed and visually impressive.

Tom Jones is light hearted and entertaining and contains some charming music. Marie Clark have delivered a show that will, on the whole, be enjoyed by their audiences.