

BROS Theatre Company

ME AND MY GIRL • MAY 1997 • RICHMOND THEATRE

REVIEW • MIDDLESEX CHRONICLE

A Joyous Evening

There are few musical shows more joyous than Me and My Girl and the revised version, which ran for eight years at the Adelphi in London, offered BROS every opportunity to fill the stage of Richmond Theatre with milling crowds of hangers-on to the upper class and salt-of-the-earth 'sarf Lunnoners' as wells as giving principals a frame within which to demonstrate their talents.

And what talents there were on show ! - from the ever ebullient Bryan Cardus as Bill, the Lambeth boy who succeeds to an earldom, and Sue Currie as his ever-loving Sally to Bob Salter's inimitable snob with a heart of gold and Clare Henderson Roe's magnificent Duchess determined to turn Bill into her idea of an aristocrat.

All brought something special to their parts, particularly Currie in 'Once you lose your heart', which she sang with a poignancy that was enough to make the audience catch it's collective breath.

Between them, directors Alison Titchmarsh and Martin Elliff kept the whole thing moving pretty well apart from some overlong pauses as the chorus had to get off stage.

Andrew Macbean was a superbly schizoid Parchester, Steve Alais gloriously Jeeves-like as Charles and Ruth Saunders an ideally spoilt gold-digging Jacqui. And there were dozens of tiny roles taken with wit and care - all adding up to a great evening.

**George Allan
Middlesex Chronicle**

REVIEW • RICHMOND & TWICKENHAM TIMES

A Classy Backward Glance

Barnes & Richmond Operatic Society was charming audiences at the Richmond Theatre last week with a revival of the revival of Noel Gay's Me and My Girl, first produced in London in 1937.

That's to say, this BROS production, directed by Martin Eliff, Alison Titchmarsh and musically directed by Carl Smith, was Stephen Fry's revised version of the book, with some extra songs from the Noel Gay canon. A barnstorming performance by Robert Lindsay in the leading role, brought the show it's second success in Leicester and London from 1984 to 1993.

Bryan Cardus gave a high-energy performance as the Cockney sparrer, Bill Snibson, the barrer boy who turns out to be the long-lost Earl of Hareford and creates mayhem among the aristocracy.

Although Sue Currie as Bill's Lambeth girlfriend Sally, gets to sing soulfully, she also has to come out with 'Everybody knows Joan of Arc was married to Noah'. She, as well as Bill, has finally to undergo an Eliza Doolittle-like transformation to be acceptable to the upper classes.

In fact, apart from Clare Henderson Roe, in impressively good voice as the formidable Duchess and Ruth Saunders as the predatory aristo, Jaquie, who tries to seduce Bill in 'You Would if You Could', the women take a back seat in the show.

Highlights in the rather slow first half included Andrew Macbean making his mark in song and dance as 'The Family Solicitor', Sally and Bill with the beguiling title number, and the whole cast giving their all in the show-stopping 'Lambeth Walk'.

Shining brightly in the second half were Ruth Saunders, Andy Yeates (Jaquie & Gerald) and the Chorus in 'The Sun has Got His Hat On', and the company were resplendent in shimmering reds and blacks at the Hunt Ball.

Steve Alais assumed great dignity as Charles the butler but relaxed into syncopated activity for the dance numbers. Edward Jeffroy was a delightfully bumbling Sir Jasper but, for me, Bob Salter as Sir John stole the accolade for comedy. His rapport with an audience was marvellous as he, apparently, ad libs in encounters with a Tart, an 'educated' policeman, and his mallet-swinging scene with the Duchess was a masterly piece of comic business.

If you could ignore the show's condescension, it's patronising and sentimental view of British working class life, and enjoy it on the pure entertainment level, then this production would not have disappointed. The Friday night audience obviously had no such qualms as the final curtain eventually came down to resounding cheers.

Jenny Scott
Richmond & Twickenham Times
