

BROS Theatre Company

Closer Than Ever • September 2003 • Parkshot

REVIEW

BROS Theatre Company's production of the American musical *Closer Than Ever* at the Parkshot Studio Theatre last week was a lively affair.

A talented cast of ten (five men and five women) responded with skill and enthusiasm to firm musical direction and imaginative choreography.

The show, written by Richard Maitby Jnr and David Shire, revolves around the lives of people living in a New York apartment block. The opening number 'Doors' showed the cast emerging from their apartments and travelling on the subway to work. From then on members of the cast performed solos, duets and trios all concerned with life's problems and rewards, all coming together for three more company songs.

Staging was simple: a green background to five grey and white doors on various levels through which the artistes came and went. Costume was basic: unisex black trousers and white shirts to which were added items appropriate to the characters portrayed.

One of my favourite numbers was 'One of the Good Guys' performed in contemplative mood by Andy Yeates dressed in a towelling bathrobe. Another was 'There's Nothing Like It' in which the company donned exercise gear to act out an exercise class in the first verse rejoicing in the exhilaration of exercise, then in the second bewailing the pain it caused.

Variety to the basic costume for another company number 'Sound of Muzak' was achieved by the addition of large black bow ties.

Top of the bill must be Robbin Pierce. In her first number 'Miss Byrd' dressed as a Janet Street-Porter lookalike, she told of the secretary bird who pretended to be stupid but was really anything but. Her second solo number, performed with poker-faced double bass player, Ben Griffiths, was entitled 'Back to Base'. In it her mellow mezzo soared and swooped through several octaves in Cleo Laine style, but always returned, dead in tune, back to base. She also looked stunning in a sexy, figure-hugging brown frock.

Oliver Jackson directed from his piano, aided by bass player, Ben Griffiths. They achieved great rhythm, but sometimes drowned the singers, not all of whom had strong or resonant voices. Some singers' diction was not perfect and many complicated lyrics did not come across.

Many congratulations to the cast, director Tom Butler and choreographer Sharon Baker for providing an evening of great entertainment.

Joy Manners
Richmond & Twickenham Times
