

BROS Theatre Company

## **ANNE OF GREEN GABLES • MARCH 1974 • RICHMOND THEATRE**

REVIEW • RICHMOND & TWICENHAM TIMES

### **Centenary, premiere and it's a hit!**

In all honesty, I never really believed that Barnes and Richmond Operatic Society's production of Anne of Green Gables, at Richmond theatre with week, would live up to its build up. European amateur premiere, centenary production, budget of £4,000 – it seemed all set for the anti-climax of the year award.

So it comes as an extra special pleasure to say that the show is a huge success all round and a fine example to less experienced societies intending to present Anne of Green Gables.

One of the nicest things about the show – and there are many to choose from – is that it features so many younger members of the society, whose talent and vitality should ensure the presentation of another 100 shows at least.

Since its last major production at Richmond, the society has evidently recruited quite a few younger members, all of whom make a good impression with their acting, singing and dancing.

The story is an ideal one for a musical, mixing humour with sentiment, rivalry with romance, propriety with outrage. It has all the necessary ingredients, plus some attractive tunes, played with some gusto by the Limbourne Orchestra, conducted by Bernard Dunn, whose enthusiasm is clearly infectious.

Apart from the show-stoppers, numbers I liked particularly were "We clearly requested a boy", a tricky three-sided affair, faultlessly sung by Lynne James, Joyce Tatlow and Bob Martyn, soon after Anne's arrival at Green Gables; the bouncy "Humble Pie", also Lynne James and Bob Martyn; and "I'll show him", Lynne James again.

As you will have gathered Lynne James, who plays Anne, makes quite an impression in her first major role with the society.

No taller than a pixie, Lynne gives a performance of tremendous charm and vivacity as the little girl with an imagination to suit all occasions.

Whether she is throwing a temper, tantrum or cowering with humility, Lynne has the audience in the palm of her hand, which, if the chattering first-night audience is anything to go by, takes some doing.

Anne's stern-faced guardian, Marilla, is played with a splendid air of matronly indignation by Joyce Tatlow, ideally cast, whose very fine rendering of "I can't find the words" in the final scene moved me, quite unexpectedly, to tears.

Marilla's lovable, easy-going brother, Mathew, is nicely under-played by Bob Martyn, a Canadian, whose accent is scarcely better than any of the others, surprisingly.

Alan Titchmarsh and Ann Wengraf, whom I remembered from "Half a Sixpence", are both

excellent as Anne's rivals in study and love respectively, and Rita Ashbourne contributes an elegant performance as a kind-hearted schoolmistress.

The accents, as I have suggested, are surprisingly good, especially the principals, and Jackie Ridgwell's choreography has an easy, loose-limbed look about it, which is probably quite deceptive.

A show like this is obviously the consummation of many talents and much hard graft, but one man takes the credit for its overall success and that's the director, Peter Spencer, who managed to infuse the same sort of excitement into this show as he did with "Oklahoma!" two years ago.

The week is sold out, I am told, so it's not much use trying to get in now. The lucky ones who have seen it or are going to see it can hardly fail to look back on it with affection, warmth and appreciation.

**Nick Smurthwaite**  
**Richmond & Twickenham Times**

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