Eldorado Musical Productions

Society :		**Pickwick**
Production	:	October 2008
Date	:	The Bob Hope Theatre
Venue	:	Chris Williams
Report by	:	

The production team of Director, **Barbara Archer**, Musical Director, **Martin Cleave** and Choreographer, **Maria Berry,** put together a show which was full of pace and allowed the principals and supporting characters scope to put flesh on the well-known characters that the pen of Dickens created. The Choreography was particularly good in the ballroom scene where it fitted the music and the enjoyment of the various characters.

The show opened with the very clean debtors - clothes and hands and faces - being allowed out of the unsanitary conditions of the Fleet Prison in the early morning and the **chorus** came into its own with the liveliness of 'Talk'. 'That's What I'd Like for Christmas' was simply and effectively staged with the passing on of the Christmas presents and the singing became more robust when the whole company appeared.

The Pickwickians were, as in the original, a singular group of fellows, Snodgrass played by **Derek Silk** complete with yet another resplendent wig, Tupman played skittishly by **James Hay** and Winkle played by **Wayne Lawrence**. Mr Jingle has to be a light-weight Jack-the-lad capable of being a natural story-teller and at times **Mark Ramsden**'s characterisation lacked this plausibility. Jingle, Snodgrass, Tupman and Rachel, **Katrina Summerfield** brought a good touch of light comic relief to the song 'There's something about you' in scene 4 which followed the well-choreographed 'Quadrille'. Sam Weller, **Tom Harvey**, together with quite a good cockney accent, and Mary, cheerfully played by **Natalie Payne**, sang 'Learn a Little Something' well and both looked good together. Sam with his father, Tony Weller, ably played by **Keith Payne** gave an entertaining rendition of 'The Trouble with Women'. Mrs Bardle, played by **Gwen Godwin** with an interesting mix of accents, was a forceful but much wronged Mrs Bardle and her scene with Pickwick was quite touching in places. Pickwick, **Barry White**, proved a cheerful amiable character who would always with the best of intentions never quite say or do the right thing, and the song of the show, 'If I ruled the World', summed up all that Mr Pickwick stood for.
Sgt. Buzfuz was played by **Chris Shaw** with a clear authoritative voice. The other supporting characters of Isabella, **Bethan Campbell**, Emily, **Jo Watt,** Mr Fogg, **Robin Collett** and Mr Dodson, **Alan Davis**, all helped to bring the posthumous adventures to their rightful conclusion.

Pickwick with its many sets is quite a tricky show to do, but the all-purpose wooden frame-work that at one moment could be in the court-house and at another the up-stairs at The George and Vulture, easily transformed the scenes. The black tabs, however, did make for quite a harsh backdrop which therefore required unsubtle lighting. There were some intrusions into the action when the set needed to be changed and because the stage crew were not all wearing long-sleeved black tops they were too easily seen. There was also one occasion when the stage crew appeared to wonder on to move the black tabs across the cyc., before the trucks were removed for the interior ballroom; good use was made of the silver-blue drapes to give a touch of colour and opulence to that scene. There was some light spillage from the scene dock on stage right which in the BHT is often a problem, or it has been this season for some other companies. The costumes were colourful and in keeping with the period.
An entertaining show which played to a very appreciative audience on the night I attended.
Thanks to Jean Smith and Jim Nugent for their helpfulness.

Chris