Kipps The New Half A Sixpence Musical – Reviews

Kev Castle

"Kipps - the New Half A Sixpence Musical"
Carlton Operatic Society
Nottingham Theatre Royal

To set the tone for this review, let me just say that everything about this production is of the quality that you'd expect from a West End production, at a fraction of the ticket price.

I've seen "Half A Sixpence" several times but this is the newer version. The writing team behind the stage version of "Mary Poppins" re-united to update this classic British musical concentrating on Arthur Kipps.

Arthur is an orphan, an over-worked draper's assistant at Shalford's Bazaar, Folkestone, at the turn of the last century. Along with his fellow apprentices, Flo, Sid, Pierce and Buggins, he dreams of a better and more fulfilling world, but he likes his fun just like any other. When Kipps unexpectedly inherits a fortune that propels him into high society, it confuses everything he thought he knew about life.

Watching him wrestle with his new identity is his childhood companion and his best girl friend, Ann Pornick, who sees how Arthur is being made over in a new image by the classy Helen Walsingham. She is always there with helpful hints on how Arthur could improve himself and make his life richer and more meaningful, if only he would believe in himself, and listen to her.

Both of these young women love Arthur – there is no doubt about that – but which should he listen to? With the help of his friends, Arthur learns that if you want to have the chance of living the right life, you need to make the right choices.

This new version of "Half A Sixpence", which returns to the H. G. Wells semi-autobiographical novel, "Kipps", in order to reinvent the musical "Half a Sixpence" for the modern age, reunites book-writer Julian Fellowes, who everyone knows for writing "Downton Abbey", with George Stiles and Anthony Drewe, the musical team that co-creator Cameron Mackintosh put together to create the updated stage adaptation of Mary Poppins with Disney. Julian Fellowes returns the musical to its literary roots, in a timeless and contemporary way, and Stiles and Drewe's infectious new score blends well the original score.

As with every production that Carlton Operatic stage, they like to include as many performers as they can, so be prepared for a massive production, on every scale.

Arthur Kipps is played by Lu Anthony. This is their debut for Carlton Operatic Society, even though local theatre followers will know Lu from many other productions in the past with other societies and in various venues. Lu brings the down to earth feel of Tommy Steele's Kipps along with Lu's own flair for choreographic experience. Their voice has never sounded so good as in some of these songs, which they do more than deliver, they performs these songs. Their energy is so evident as Kipps, and there's not many scenes where they are not actually on stage.

They also learnt how to play the banjo for this role in less than a month. Their chemistry with everyone is something that I know Lu develops with ease and their performance is totally believable. There really is nothing that Lu can't turn their hand to, and I know that even though they were nervous leading up to this show, it looks like everything has fallen into place for them because their performance on Tuesday night was faultless.

Ann Pornick, Arthur's childhood sweetheart, is played by Sarah Thompson. I mentioned the chemistry that Lu has, and this coupling is just so sweet, which then matures really nicely when they meet up again several years later. Sarah's voice is such a gorgeous instrument, especially highlighted in Ann's solo, "Long Ago".

Sid Pornick, Ann's elder brother and an apprentice at Shalford's Bizarre, is played by Jonathan Jaycock. The joy of seeing different theatrical groups is seeing many actors performing for other companies at different venues, and I've seen Jonathan several times before, so I knew just how strong this cast was, just by looking at the cast list. Jonathan is a strong actor with a strong voice, both qualities shown in this role.

Lizzie Fenner plays the other corner of the love triangle, Helen Walsingham. Lizzie has a lovely clipped brogue for Helen, reminiscent of Julie Andrews in "Mary Poppins". Helen is one of those characters who you do feel a little sorry for, because if it were not for her mother, maybe Helen and Arthur might have had a good shot at marriage, because Helen and Arthur really do want just a small house to live in and be happy in. Helen is educated, classy and beautiful and glides around a room more than merely walks. Lizzie is obviously perfectly cast.

Mrs Walsingham is Helen's domineering mother. Fussy, tiresome, full of self importance. A snob. Played wonderfully by Lindsey Jaycock.

James Walsingham, Helen's brother, is a somewhat corrupt financial advisor. He is seemingly the more favoured offspring of Mrs Walsingham and is played by James Ellison. James also doubles as the brilliantly camp photographer in the massively fun scene at Arthur's wedding where we get to experience "Flash, Bang Wallop". I almost expected the audience to boo James when he came on to take his final bows because the character James embezzled all of Arthur's money away, but they didn't.

Dan Armstrong plays both Foster and Chitterlow. Chitterlow delivers the good news to Arthur about his inheritance and advises Arthur to invest some of his inheritance in Chitterlow's play about backing the right horse. "The Joy Of Theatre" is one of those very clever theatre songs that make for a memorable few minutes in the hands and vocals of a charismatic actor, and Dan has always been charismatic, on and off stage, and also has a fine set of vocal chords.

James Sikora plays Pierce, another of the apprentices. This is the second show that I've seen James in; the last being at Bingham as Silly Billy in pantomime. That was James' first show for about a decade, so I'm so pleased to see James making his debut for Carlton Operatic in a full blown musical theatre piece.

Buggins, another apprentice, is played by George Young, a name and face that I know really well from many theatre productions in Nottingham. For this role though, George's trademark hair was gone, and had been dyed blond; completely unrecognisable from anything else that I'd seen him in. This is also George's Carlton operatic debut.

Flo is the head window dresser at Shalford's Bizarre, and is played by Alison Watkins. Alison is a well recognised name and face around the local stages, and is always a welcome cast member in any production.

Playing Lady Punnet, the wealthy friend of Mrs Walsingham, is Helen Tunnicliff. Lady Punnet has hired Ann as a maid at her music evenings, which is an event that Arthur has been invited to, by Mrs Walsingham, which is where the reconciliation between Arthur and his childhood sweetheart starts.

Did I mention that it was a large cast? Let me tell you who the rest of them are....

Claire Collishaw (Aunt Susan), Adam Collishaw (Uncle Bert), Darren Ward (Mr Shalford), Celine McKeown (Carshot and Lady Dacre), Stacey Ireson (Hayes), Danniella Anderson (Miss Ross), Rebekah Daley (Mrs Bindo-Botting), Hannah Haywood-Cupitt (Mary), Wendy Austin-Giddings (Miss Maxwell) Eleanor Adey (Ruby), Frank Ellis (Charles), Brogan Haynes (John), Sarah Hill (Virginia), Alice Kirkby (Betty), Coragh O'Donnell (Beatrice), Helen Taylor (Mildred), Katie Waller (Mildred) and Bekki Wilson (Ada). All worthy of a mention.

There are two teams of young ensembles; Team Folkstone and Team Romney. On Tuesday night I saw Team Romney who were Caitlin Young, Eliza Szejda, Sophia Rees, Eloise Rees, Grace Moroziuk, Jacob Jacques-Phillips, Megan Holder, Emily Holder and Henry Armstrong.

Directed by Rachael Rees, who also choreographed "Kipps". A massive amount of work has gone into the show and these dance routines, and I especially loved the big numbers "If The Rain's Gotta Fall", "Pick Out A Simple Tune" which has Hollywood style choreography written all over it, and of course "Flash, Bang Wallop". You'd expect this standard of choreographical quality from something from the West End, but who needs to pay to travel down south when we have that standard up here.

Musical Director is Christopher Rees. The musical has a brilliant soundtrack, "Half A Sixpence", "She's Too Far Above Me", "The Joy Of The Theatre", "If the Rain's Gotta Fall", "Pick Out A Simple Tune", "In the Middle There's Me" and "Flash, Bang, Wallop". The sound was perfectly balanced and could have been lifted from a professional backing track, the sound was so good from this fourteen piece orchestra. The quality of the vocals from this incredibly talented cast also is proof of the immense work that has been invested over the months by Chris and the cast.

Wardrobe by Charades Theatrical Costume Hire - St Helens is another piece of this spectacular jigsaw. They are gorgeous all round.

The wonderful wigs are supplied by Wig Art Theatrical.

A large cast has to be staged managed to the second and so I applaud Stage managers Vicky Johnson, Nigel Newton and Matthew Allcock for a tight job.

The sets are excellent and supplied by Scenic Projects.

Sound by Rob Kettridge. This was so well balanced, I heard every word, spoken and sung, no missed cues anywhere. What more could you ask from a Sound Designer?

Lighting by James Vella, and when you have a Lighting Consultant like Tom Mowat, you are guaranteed a perfect lighting design from this dynamic duo, which is exactly what we got. Mentions also to follow spot operators Cathy Bodman and Simon Carter.

Hopefully my review has not been critical or over analytical, and is more than good to fair; it certainly left me more than perky and is definitely not a turkey and my indorsement is good to share. Carlton Operatic have certainly backed the right horse with this show, as proven by the standing ovations at the end of the show.

"Kipps - the New Half A Sixpence Musical" is at the Nottingham Theatre Royal until Saturday 1 June, and is so worth the price of the ticket.

East Midlands Theatre Review

James Jordan



There will be a certain generation of theatre goer seasoned enough to remember one of the first teen idols to capture the hearts and imaginations of the UK back in the 1950's and 60's – Mr Tommy Steele. I have to confess I'm not one of them. However, I am aware that the original musical Half A Sixpence, upon which Kipps is based, was conceived as a vehicle to show off the talents of said Mr Steele. He appeared in the show in the West End, on Broadway and most famously, on film. He sang and danced his way through twelve of the fifteen numbers and research informs me that reviewers of the day suggested that the show was shmaltzy and saccharine – just what everybody needed! It was a huge hit. I've never seen it, so this performance of Kipps by Carlton Operatic Society will serve as my induction.

This relatively recently updated version of the musical, no longer featuring Tommy Steele (now 87 – imagine!), but still very much promising to feature all the toe tapping numbers he brought to life is based on the semi-

autobiographical 1905 novel Kipps by HG Wells. It tells the story of young Arthur 'Artie' Kipps, an orphan boy turned drapery apprentice whose life is dramatically turned upside down by the inheritance of a small fortune. He finds himself suddenly popular among the higher echelons of society and discovers that he has some difficult decisions to make about who and what is important to him and how he wants his life to look.

The music is by George Stiles and David Heneker with lyrics by Heneker and Anthony Drewe. The piece was updated for the twenty-first century by none other than Julian Fellowes (he of 'Downton Abbey' fame). If anybody can tell a yarn about the upstairs/downstairs battle of the classes it is Mr Fellowes. As I take my seat in the theatre I'm intrigued to see how this one plays out.

Arthur 'Artie' Kipps is energetically brought to life for us here by Lu Anthony. Anthony is quite simply stunning in the role, investing Kipps with a cheeky smile and loveable disposition. Barely off stage all evening, they do a superb job of depicting the rags to riches rollercoaster ride and we really do sense the heartbreak of the decisions that need to be made along the way. Anthony's rendition of Half a Sixpence is wonderful and there is a tap dance routine to accompany If The Rain's Got To Fall which is nothing short of breathtaking. This Artie Kipps is an example of pitch perfect casting – clearly a labour of love, served up with oodles of charm. Performance perfection.

Kipps' childhood sweetheart Ann Pornick is played by Sarah Thompson who gives Ann a feisty edge whilst losing nothing of the sweet and loyal character on the page. She has an exceptional emotional range and a stunning voice – we really feel for her when she's overlooked for Helen Walsingham (Lizzie Fenner). Fenner in turn gives Helen an elegance and alluring sophistication. The chemistry between the three characters in this love triangle is magnificent.

Helen's parents James (James Ellison) and Mrs Walsingham (Lindsey Jaycock) have aspirations of grandeur and principally want to get their hands on Kipps' new-found fortune. These two have some wonderful comedy moments not least of all during Pick Out A Simple Tune – one of those amazing set pieces that evolves into a joyous ensemble singalong that old school musicals such as this do best.

Also out to exploit poor Artie is the thrifty thespian Chitterlow (Dan Armstrong) who is looking for investment into his latest turkey of a play. Armstrong gives Chitterlow a lavish largesse that is particularly associated with that type of actor-manager of the past leaving us in no doubt whatsoever that he is a grand luvvie and shrewd charlatan alike. He leads the company in a superbly rousing rendition of The Joy of The Theatre which has a splendid swing to it.

There are some stand out performances from Kipps' fellow apprentices too, especially Sid Pornick (Jonathan Jaycock) who is a towering figure with a deliciously dour energy and Buggins (George Young) who mainly thinks about food and in turn serves up each line with quite exquisite comedy timing.

These central characters are ably supported by an enthusiastic, talented and (oh my goodness) large ensemble. The dance numbers in this production are high energy and fun, transporting us back to the golden age of musicals. Kudos to Director/Choreographer Rachael Rees who has placed every performer to perfection creating a visually stunning piece. The live band (how wonderful!) under the direction of Christopher Rees ably accompany the performers and drive the show ever onward.

Kipps the Musical is good old-fashioned fun – perfect escapism – what a picture indeed! It oozes charm from every pore and will have you tapping your toes and whistling the melodies for days to come. So, what are you waiting for? Grab yourself some tickets. Catch it at the Theatre Royal Nottingham until Saturday 1st June 2024.

Travel with Rob and Sue

No half measures with Kipps
PUBLISHED ON May 29, 2024

Here I am again, reviewing a theatrical performance, which to be honest isn't really my thing.

But this performance deserves a special mention. This is the Carlton Operatic Society's fabulous performance of Kipps – based on the musical "Half a Sixpence".

Whenever I think about amateur dramatic societies, I immediately start to lower my expectations. I mean, they will never be as good as professionals, will they?

Go wash your mouth out Robert!

Kipps is the story of Arthur Kipps and his childhood sweetheart Ann. When Arthur comes into some money, he suddenly finds himself elevated into high society, leaving Ann behind. Will true love prevail? You will have to watch the show to find out.

The story is easy to follow and fun to watch it as it unfolds on stage.

I've seen a few 'Society' productions in the past, and while they are good, they aren't perfect. Carlton Operatic Society describe themselves as a "proud group of talented singers, dancers and actors who come together to perform professional-standard productions".

For most that may seem a little conceited, but not for this group. They are spectacular, the productions are polished and I could have easily forgiven myself for thinking I was sat in the West End watching the show.

The other thing that may deter people from watching is the Society's name – Operatic. While I haven't yet seen anything operatic (but would love to, it's on my bucket list) there is absolutely nothing operatic about this production and no-one should be put off by the title of the group.

The lead character, Arthur Kipps, was played by Lu Anthony – while this was their first performance with Carlton, they have a proven track record with other societies with a string of well known productions.

A very talented performer, Lu gave us an amazingly strong deep voice when it suits, interspersed with a timid endearing Souf' England accent, and is an exceptional singer. Throw in some amazing dance moves and a solid tap routine, and Lu's first outing with Carlton was a 100% outstanding success.

Ann Pornick was confidently played by Sarah Thompson who also has a talented singing voice, a good comedy timing and competent dance skills – I especially liked her duet with Flo, played by Alison Watkins, both of them giving a very strong performance that was well received by the audience.

The cast was huge, too big to give everyone a mention here, but I will single out Helen Tunnicliff who played Lady Punnet, who added a very funny comedic touch to the number "Pick out a simple tune". I don't know if it was accidental or deliberate, but on occasion there were shades of Julie Walter in her performance, which I particularly liked.

The choreography was exceptional, the whole cast's timing and positioning was perfect – we had a particularly good overview from the back of the dress circle and I never saw anyone out of place or out of step.

But for both myself and Sue, the thing that stood out was the sheer energy on stage. It is a fast moving show with many fast moving numbers – "Flash Bang Wallop" was the highlight for me and exceptionally well delivered – and the energy just didn't stop. Straight after the show ended and the cast made their bows and left the stage, the rear curtains re-opened to reveal the cast re-assembled for an additional short musical routine with every cast member seemingly playing a banjo, and if that wasn't enough, they then did a short dance reprise to many of the show's songs while the orchestra played out, finally bringing the whole theatre to their feet for a well deserved standing ovation.

I think the most exciting and heartwarming thing for me was the huge smiles on all the cast's faces all the way through the show, and especially at the final curtain when they were positively beaming.

And why not? It's not a job, they do this for sheer enjoyment, and they were certainly well received and justly rewarded last night.

Don't be put off – this is a class show and you will be missing a treat if you don't get yourself down to the theatre before it finishes on Saturday!

(We paid full price for our tickets and have no links with the Carlton Operatic Society)

Theatre Online

Kipps - The New Half A Sixpence
Carlton Operatic Society
Nottingham Theatre Royal
May 28th 2024

'What a triumph' sing the cast in the Flash Bang Wallop finale of this breathtakingly good production. They're not wrong. It's a wonderfully entertaining show, showcasing excellent local talent and living up to the rave reviews this revamped production received when it premiered at the Chichester Festival in 2016. Such rich story telling – first from the pen of the visionary H G Wells in 1905, then retold as a vehicle for Tommy Steele in the 1963 'Half A Sixpence' and finally reimagined through the wit and warmth of Julian Fellowes, in collaboration with Stiles and Drewe. No better songwriters to add their own touch with vibrantly entertaining and witty songs that constantly bring a smile to the face and get the feet tapping.

None of this means a jot though, unless the production brings talent, energy, emotion, colour and fun to the material and this is just what Carlton Operatic, through the visionary direction and choreography of Rachael Rees and some exceptional performers, has done. Time flies when you're having fun and this show just races by; from the balmy esplanade of Folkestone to the stiff collars of Shalford's Drapers, to the even stiffer High Society venues and back to the soggy beermats in the Hope and Anchor pub, we travel with Kipps, as he discovers that money isn't everything. The excellent set with its nifty blue and filigreed flats, that serve to divide the space and the action, richly evokes the Edwardian period; we're taken inside the authentic draper's shop, to lady Punnet's elegant drawing room and back to the pier, complete with a hall of mirrors and a fortune teller. Much credit should go to Vicky Johnson, Nigel Newton and Matthew Allcock for their unobtrusive and slick management of this richly detailed and complicated set, that is such a joy to see against the sympathetic background of our magnificent Theatre Royal.

So to the performers – this show was a vehicle for Tommy Steele originally and Lu Anthony assumes that mantle with ease, energy and an enormous amount of talent. I first saw Lu in 2016 in Singin' in The Rain and wrote then that I'd just seen a genuine 'trip-le threat', one of those rare amateur performers who can act, sing and dance equally well. It's even more true now, as Lu gives us a warmly engaging Kipps, who is taken in by those he perceives are better than him, yet never bowed; this is a chipper, cheeky chappie. The accent is impeccably Cockney – I don't know if a vocal coach was employed or Lu just listened to Rylan a lot, but it's spot on. Songs such as Half A Sixpence, She's Too Far Above Me and the joyous Flash Bang Wallop are beautifully sung; Kipps is on the stage almost constantly and a lot of that time he's dancing, too. Lu excels at this, always a joy to watch, with some wonderful moves that complete a captivating characterisation.

Kipps is lucky enough to have two love interests, the down to earth Ann, a sweetheart from childhood to whom he gives the half sixpence, and Helen, the sweet toff, who is a reluctant pawn in her family's scheming. Sarah Thompson and Lizzie Fenner both nail their respective accents, mangling and honing vowels to great effect. Lizzie brings real warmth to the trapped Helen, who reminds me of Princess Louise, Queen Victoria's daughter, desperate to give free reign to her artistic talents, but trapped by status and the demands of an overbearing mother. Lizzie keeps her beautifully contained yet warm and gets to show off her lovely pure voice, particularly in the wistful yet powerful Believe in Yourself.

Sarah develops her character from the naïve teenage to the humble but insightful parlour maid who sadly witnesses the change in her beau, due to his unexpected windfall. Sarah has a lovely, emotionally resonant voice and this is showcased in several songs; I particularly enjoyed her duet with Flo - the window dresser at Shalford's Drapers - Just a Little Touch of Happiness. Both have great voices and Alison Watkins (Flo) is a wonderfully entertaining performer; this was a highlight among many during the show.

Kipps' other friends in the drapers are Pornick, Pierce and Buggins, brought to life so engagingly by Jonathan Jaycock, James Sikora and George Young. H G Wells wrote about his own life as a draper's assistant, he wrote social realism

with the warmth and insight that comes from personal experience and with the type of engaging detail that the writers of soaps aspire to today. It's great fun watching these characters interact and making the most of their 13 hour days serving the rich, while keeping their own dreams alive.

The other side of the sixpence, as it were, comes from the rich, or would be rich, as Helen's family are somewhat reduced and looking for a way out and up. Mrs Walsingham is played by Lindsay Jaycock, ably portraying the rather sad social climber who is desperate to restore her wealth and buy a property that reflects her standing. Her equally desperate son James is played by James Ellison with a delightful mix of arrogance and oiliness, as he persuades Kipps to invest in his portfolio. A cleverly choreographed lunch (A Simple Lunch) highlights both the awkwardness of Kipps, the unease of Helen and the sheer awfulness of Mrs Walsingham and James. A hard scene to manage, but this director and these actors pull it off brilliantly.

Another toff, this time with the riches to prove it, is the beautifully mannered, aloof but gossipy Lady Punnet. With the looks and cut glass vowels of Joanna Lumley, she is played elegantly by Helen Tunnicliff.

A catalyst for plot development is Chitterlow, a would be theatre impresario who literally bumps into Kipps while out on his bike and proves to be a useful friend: one who puts Kipps resolutely on the path to riches. Dan Armstrong's superb delivery of this flamboyant character reminded me of Tom Baker; he's confident, over the top, warm and engaging with some great vocals. Yet another highlight.

Darren Ward plays the stiff as a starched collar draper, Mr Shalford and Claire Collishaw and Adam Collishaw play the Kipps' warmly supportive Aunt and Uncle. There are numerous cameos, all important as they create such realism, whether it be as characters in the pub, visitors to a musical soiree, or passers by on the pier.

There are some huge numbers that the ensemble give their all to, they dance and sing up a storm, particularly in the wonderfully choreographed Pick Out A Simple Tune and that humdinger of a finale. The younger members of the ensemble – we saw Team Romney – are delightful and it's clear all have worked very hard to bring their characters to life and be thoroughly convincing on stage.

I was pleased that the sound by Rob Kettridge was so good at this production and that every word of dialogue and song lyrics could be heard, as they are really worth listening to; loved the atmospherics too – I was at the seaside! Lighting (Jamie Vella & Tom Mowat) is excellent, particularly in the grand finale, but throughout there is unobtrusive highlighting and almost flawless spotting. Production values all round are top notch, wonderful costumes give this already stylish piece the period detail that it deserves and make it richly descriptive of the time.

Rachael Rees must have put her heart and soul into this production and been delighted with the level of performance that's been achieved, none less than by Musical Director Chris Rees and his 14 piece orchestra, working with these talented performers. It must have been such hard work for everyone involved, but it's paid off and this show, costing less than a quarter of West End productions to see, is of the absolute highest quality.

Back to that finale, which simply rocks and goes on for a satisfyingly long time; it follows the wonderful Flash Bang Wallop with a reprise of other great tunes, some fabulous banjo playing and some breathtaking dancing. Phew!

This show deserves packed audiences, who will be as delighted as those standing at the end of last night's performance were; Carlton Operatic are banging that big bass drum until Saturday 1st June.

NODA

Company:	Carlton Operatic Society
Production:	Kipps – The New Half a Sixpence Musical
Director:	Rachael Rees
Musical Director:	Christopher Rees
Choreographer:	Rachael Rees

Venue: Theatre Royal Nottingham

Date: 28 May 2024

Author: H G Wells, Beverley Cross, David Heneker, George Stiles, Anthony Drewe, and Julian Fellowes

Written by: Martin Holtom

I have to say that my previous experiences with Kipps the New Half a Sixpence Musical had not been the most enjoyable, so I was not sure what to expect when I went tonight to the Theatre Royal to see this Carlton Operatic interpretation.

It is no exaggeration to say that I was completely blown away by the sheer quality, energy and smiles from every cast member while delivering high energy choreography and I now understand that when produced by a team who understand how to bring out the best in this musical what an exhilarating experience and a triumph it can be! Rachael and Christopher Rees have, with their talented cast, production team and orchestra, created a magical experience for their audiences and converted me to be a big fan of this musical.

Starting with the cast, in the title role of Arthur Kipps was Lu Anthony. I have worked with Lu on stage before in a production of Jesus Christ Superstar that was stopped by Covid so knew the talent they had, but tonight Lu delivered a staggering performance, the complete triple threat in their Dance, Vocals and Acting. Lu was on-stage in virtually every scene and for every second they were completely believable as their journey from junior draper to monied Gentleman and finally Theatre Angel played out across the night. Bravo! Sarah Thompson was perfect as Ann Pornick, Kipps' childhood sweetheart. Sarah managed to bring out the despair and patience of her character as she went through life as a working servant until the smile of joy lit up the stage when she finally agreed to marry Artie. Lizzie Fenner was perfectly cast as Helen Walsingham the "other woman" in Artie's life and succeeded in making Helen a very sympathetic character and not a cliched wealthy toff. Lizzie won the affection of the audience and so when Artie finally chose to marry Ann you could feel the admiration and sympathy for Helen all around the auditorium.

Dan Armstrong was on fine form as both Foster the Butler and Chitterlow the theatre impresario and in the latter role injected every scene he was involved in with fun, energy and dynamism. Lindsey Jaycock was also great fun as Mrs Walsingham and her reaction to losing Artie as a monied potential son in law was priceless. The Drapery team of Jonathan Jaycock, James Sikora, George Young and Alison Watkins were always on point. They provided a very believable set of "oppos" for Arthur both serving in the shop and when off duty with "Money to Burn" being one of my highlights in Act One. In fact, Alison Watkins was a revelation throughout the night and her duet with Sarah in "Just a Little Touch of Happiness" had me metaphorically out of my seat.

It's always invidious to just single out some of the key performers in such a fantastic all round cast so believe me when I say that every single cast member put all their heart, soul and talent into their performances which spoke volumes for all the work Rachael and Chris must have put in with them in the rehearsal room. So many many congratulations to James, Helen, Claire, Adam, Darren, Celine, Stacey, Danniella, Rebekah, Wendy, Hannah, Eleanor, Frank, Brogan, Sarah, Alice, Coragh, Helen, Katie and Bekki.

The production was completed by two very talented sets of junior performers who I was lucky to see giving it everything during the week so again congratulations to Henry, Emily, Megan, Jacob, Grace, Eloise, Sophia, Eliza, Caitlin, Ruby, Sophie, Harley, Lottie, Leo, Hermione, Isabelle, Hemi and Betsy.

Now a word about the Orchestra. Chris has a reputation for being one of the best MDs around and the sheer quality of sound, dynamics and balance with the on-stage performers in this production were second to none. The Banjo playing was outstanding when it needed to be a focus and every member of the Orchestra delivered their part of what was both a wall of sound that never dragged in the high energy numbers and a delicate underscore of the more poignant moments. The orchestral climax that was Flash Bang Wallop will remain in my memory for some time.

Finally the movement throughout the show. It's hard to capture the quality of the technical precision and smile inducing energy that came through the full cast set pieces and various small cast numbers throughout the show. The

choreography was fast and dynamic when it needed to be, and gentle and heartwarming when that was called for so huge respect to Rachael and ALL the cast in this respect.

Costumes and Setting supported the overall production and were moved with great speed by the backstage team to ensure that the action moved from scene to scene seamlessly,

As I'm sure you can tell this production was one of the finest I have seen in all my time as a NODA reviewer and the whole team should be suitably proud of what they achieved.

Review in a nutshell? CLASS.

Audience Comments

"Kipps last night incredible and I hope you get a good sell out for the rest of the week.

Blown away by Lu's performance as Arthur Kipps. Tap dancing as well. Such a very talented performer. Hardly off the stage.

This could have been a West End Production.

The cast so talented and so enthusiastic performing. The acting, the singing, the choreography, the costumes, the staging and setting FABULOUS. Must have taken a long time to achieve such a standard and all come together.

Please put me on your mailing list for forthcoming productions.

Money well spent on tickets for a full evenings live entertainment on our doorstep.

Please pass this on to everyone involved." – Jacky Arnold

"So - I shoot a lot of shows. This one is soo full of energy, class and sheer joy that it would be a crime not to get to watch it. So what are you waiting for??" – Martin Holtom

"High energy show with some superb individual performances." – Janet Wootton

"Absolutely brilliant opening night" – Helen Webster

"Lu Anthony - Absolutely fantastic as Arthur...was a cracking opening night. He must have been exhausted 😅" – Philip Jackson

"Wow!! Just been to see you at Nottingham Theatre Royal and it was absolutely brilliant; thoroughly entertaining and every bit as good as a West End Production. The guy playing Arthur Kipps must have incredible energy to do what he did. We can't wait to see you again at future productions. Well done everyone and thank you for a cracking night out." – Philip Jackson

"Just been to see Kipps. Amazing show. Everyone was brilliant especially the leading man." – Jean Fletcher

"This show was absolutely phenomenal! I was enthralled by all the amazing performances and everyone involved should be so very proud of the show. Have a great run, I'd love to come again... 🥰👏" – Hannah Willmer

"We came to see the show last night. Have to say BRAVO!!!!! Truly fantastic evening. The cast were brilliant et al. WELL DONE to ALL involved and thankyou." – Kev Such

"Superb performances from everyone involved! 👏👏👏" – Dave Phillips

"Wow absolutely an amazing production throughly rate it everyone was fabulous great performance by you all loved it" – Joasia Bernadette

"Great show, well done everyone xxx" – Zoe Keen

“Fabulous show. I really enjoyed it. Such energy 😍” – Margaret Burrell

“What a fantastic production at today’s matinee. Far better than many west end and professional productions I have seen. A brilliant, brilliant cast who sang and danced their hearts out. With amazing music and costume as well.” – Geraldine Gray

“Loved the show ❤️” – Clive Marner

“Was absolutely fantastic 👏 x” – Tracey Kirkby

“My first time seeing it, never watched it previously, didn't know the storyline. ..... 5 star 🌟 absolutely loved it. First class performance, well done everyone. Kipps was outstanding, a star to watch out for.” – Karen Gold

“We saw it last night - it was wonderful!” – Mary Marwick

“Excellent performance by all. Special mention of lead performer playing Kipps, outstanding.” – Elaine Ellis

“An outstanding professional performance by everyone. Loved it x” – PJ O’Donnell

“Wow just wow. All the cast were amazing but the lead performer kipps is world class. Effortless In every way!” – Adam Reily

“Fabulous show❤️” – Mick Meyers

“Such a well deserved review 👏” – Rosemary Bromley, in response to East Midlands Theatre Review

“Amazing, very well deserved 🌟🌟🌟🌟🌟” – Matt Butler

“Saw the show last night !! Wow wow wow absolutely outstanding 👏👏👏👏” – Selfie Queen Sue

“I went yesterday to see this. I couldn't believe how good the cast was and the costumes where brilliant. I really enjoyed it and would recommend it to anyone who loves musicals” – Cheryl Bremner

“Really enjoyed Kipps at the Theatre Royal by Carlton Operatic Society. Congratulations to everyone involved. The leads were excellent, supported by a great ensemble. Loved the set & costumes. Wouldn’t have been disappointed if it had been a West End show. Must mention Kipps who was incredible, never off stage and so many costume changes to deal with. Wonderful singing, outstanding dancing, well done. Loved seeing Claire & Adam on stage together again, they played Kipps’ aunt & uncle, well done. Enjoy the rest of the week.” – Judy Watson

“We went to see the musical 'Kipps' at the Theatre 🎭 Royal today. In my 70 years of loving theatre & Particularly Musicals, this is the Best!! Congratulations to everyone involved with this production,including my own Son, Adam & Daughter in Law Claire. If you haven't got tickets yet, then go & get them! FABULOUS xx” – Kay Taylor

“Saw it yesterday. Superb!” – Derek Hollis

“I just wanted to say thank you for letting me know about the wonderful production of Half a Sixpence which we attended last night. Our group were blown away by the quality of the acting, singing, dancing and staging, all of which were truly outstanding and everyone agreed that they will certainly be on the lookout for future productions by Carlton Operatic Society. Thank you again.” – Mapperley U3A

“The best amateur show I have ever seen. Truly amazing, as good as any professional show. Credit to you all.” – Martin Olley

“The talent is extraordinary. Fantastic performances all round, as good as any West End shows I’ve seen. What a talent Lu Anthony is, definitely one to watch. I look forward to future productions. It deserves all the accolades and standing ovations it gets. 👏👏💔❤️” – Hazel Holt

“Lu as Arthur Kipps was fantastic, they have the whole package, dancing, singing acting were all spot on and the fact they learnt the banjo for the show too. Absolutely brilliant 👍🏻 👌🏻 Such a great show!” – Steph Gook

“Wonderful brilliant 👏 fantastic show well done 👏 everyone 👏, we went last well worth going to see 3 more performance left, highly recommend to go and see, 😇😘🤼‍♀️🤸‍♀️🤼‍♀️💕💕🤸‍♀️🤸‍♀️” – Susan Thay

“Saw it last night amazing great energy from all the cast x” – Judy Eastwood

“Just back home from tonights show, wonderful show, absolutely loved it,” – Colin Renshaw

“Saw it yesterday. Superb” – Derek Hollis

“This young lad [Lu] was amazing ,west end performer in the making” – Selfie Queen Sue

“As a parent You are a great company for my child to work with! 2nd year in a row hopefully more to come ❤️” – Charlotte Baxter