

Moll Flanders

Feedback from the Director

Well, this show proved to be a challenge, full of musical surprises, sex, interesting dialogue, more sex and countless costumes changes, and more sex. To do a period show accurately is always a challenge, no matter how research is being done. To convey to the cast and the audience the feel of 18th Century behaviour and mannerism is always difficult, particularly as most of the cast rehearse in jeans. Try to tell the ladies to imagine and hold themselves upright in a corseted outfit, with emphasis on correct bosom posture does lead to amusing situations. As for the gentlemen, try telling them to be act more precious! 18th Century was the Age of Enlightenment, the golden age of literature, art, music, painting, satire, religious controversy, science and philosophy with the background of every European Monarchy competing to outdo each other. Daniel Defoe was part of this and the spirit of his novel has been well captured in this Musical.

Of the show itself, the music appeared deceptively easy, till the learning process started. Harmonies and sometimes discordances were hard to learn. I had no choice but to let the music take precedence over staging, in view of the fact that we started the rehearsal 6 weeks late. I would have liked to put far more acting into the staging, but just did not have the time available. I would also have liked to devote more time to the leads and develop their characters more. I have had the most wonderful support from the main leads, who have worked on their own, learning their words and music as soon as possible, as well as presenting me with their interpretation of the scenes. This gained me time and gave me a basis to develop the character. And Ian's understand and interpretation of music and words helped to determine how I was going to stage the show. Also, we all have a life outside the theatre, and fitting a rehearsal schedule with cast holidays and work commitments is always a challenge.

It felt very lonely at first when I realised the magnitude of this production. The first person I asked was Mike Bartlett to help design the set. And he was immediately on board, though like me, he probably did not fully realise what he was taking on. Amusingly, both Ian and Mike agreed at a discussion, under the stage at the Playhouse at Walton during Pirates of Penzance. The under stage is just about a person's height and crew were about changing the set and the orchestra sorting their instruments! Mike has done a super set and has co-ordinated the works himself, and he drew on the experience of Mike Thacker who did the plans. My subsequent tasks were to put my various teams together. Everyone I contacted immediately agreed to help, and some were from other companies. This made a difference show week, and the result was a slick show, even if the technical was less than satisfactory. Wardrobe proved to be a major logistical planning effort. I make no excuse about being fussy about costumes. The audience want to see proper costumes, not make-do. The style of the costume was perfect, even if one or two were a little on the tight side. I have known shows when the majority of the costumes are not right and cast have to alter them. On the whole, these costumes fitted and looked the part on stage.

This show was decided on a whim, under pressure in less than a day, and I would not recommend this method of choosing shows in the future. Shows need to be fully assessed. Having said that, had I realised earlier the amount of work that was needed (and indeed this show took over my life for the past 5 months), I probably would not have recommended it for this specific slot. But it was a good production, or at least I hope it was, and it would have been a shame not to do it.

Have fun for Salad Days and wishing you all, your new director, Jackie, and your returning Musical Director Ian, all the best.

Martine Young

Director

(or as Mike Bartlett labelled me on the plans of the Bath scene: Imperator Martinus Maximus)