

HENFIELD THEATRE COMPANY

“CAROUSEL”

PERFORMED 13th – 16th MAY 2009 AT THE HENFIELD HALL

Henfield Theatre Company played to capacity audiences with their absorbing production of “*Carousel*”. Rogers and Hammerstein’s musical score is the best – and the ensemble played sympathetically with the players, whether introducing jugglers, acrobats and young dancers with the Carousel waltz, accompanying the tender love songs or lifting the rousing choruses.

If ever there was a case for letting the head rule the heart! However, this is a powerful portrayal of an ill-matched couple and contrary Julie Jordan (sweetly played with calm presence by Angela Westwood) just isn’t listening. With quiet determination she gets her man and it is all going to end in tears.

Director, Susanna Seaford, kept up a nifty pace throughout with no witty word or sly dig lost, her cast playing to character from the tiniest tot upwards. Graeme Muncer played the flawed hero, Billy Bigelow, with energy and a boyish charm that over-rode his lack of vocal range. One could understand the strong attraction felt by the older women, Mrs. Mullen (Marie Powell) and the naive Julie.

Belligerent Billie is only good for barking at a Carousel. Once married to Julie and unemployed in a New England fishing village he is easy pickings to evil Jigger Craigin’s plans (played with a knowing twinkle by Ian Henham). The news of Julie’s pregnancy and his need to support a family pushes Billy into bungled robbery and suicide.

Meantime, there is another love affair going on. Julie’s bubbly best friend, Carrie Pipperidge (Becky Mills) is being wooed by and won by her darling Mr. Snow. Funny little Enoch Snow (played with an infectious giggle by Brian Jones) knows exactly where he is going, and the effusive Carrie shares his expansive dreams with dimpled enthusiasm. But not if the evil Jigger gets his way – their thwarted seduction scene is delicious.

Fifteen years on and we see daughter Louise (Chelsea Fyles) stigmatized by the village children due to having a robber as a father. This is beautifully danced out by the young stars – congratulations to choreographer, Wendy Hoare. It is up to Billy to return to Earth accompanied by a ghostly friend (Chris Whitehead) to make amends.

Nettie Fowler (Linda Jordan), Julie’s supportive aunt stirred valiantly with “You’ll Never Walk Alone”, the male voices rang out and there were some lovely girly moments with the female voices. The costumes were brilliant – all contributing to a touching and exhilarating carousel ride of an evening.

Maddy Woods

18th May 2009.