

Email: salos_swindon@hotmail.com

SALOS

'9 to 5: The Musical'

Phoenix Theatre, New College Swindon

11th April 2025

Director: Russell Langdown

Chorus Music Director: Judith Sharp

Choreographer: Gemma Langdown

PLEASE NOTE:

Any observation made by the reviewer can only be based on what he sees at the performance in question. The reviewer may have received information in advance of the performance, and it is inevitable that his assessment will be effected by that knowledge.

The N.O.D.A. Representative's intention is to give an objective critique of the overall production and in particular the performance viewed. It should be remembered that any review of this nature can only be objective as far as the techniques used during the performance observed. Any criticisms expressed may not have been valid at other performances, and are only made to encourage higher standards in Amateur Theatre.

It is hoped that the audience's appreciation of your efforts will have given everyone a lift and encouraged you to greater achievements in the future and that the observations made by the reviewer will prove helpful in improving future productions.

Report by Angus Sheppard-Hughes SW Regional Representative District 16

Firstly, what a lovely venue you have invited me to for this production on 9 to 5: The Musical. Entering the venue and then into the auditorium we were greeted with friendly faces and people genuinely excited and proud to be presenting this show, and they were completely valid to be so. I am not going to recap the story, as those in the society have done the show so know it, and those reading this may want to go and watch it elsewhere, so that would ruin it for all. Instead I will concentrate on the performance itself, and how well you have produced this wonderful piece of theatre.

The **staging and set** was inventive and a great match for the venue we were in. The college's theatre was what I would call an "extended black box studio", and extending out from the "black box" was a very good choice. Added business style dressings and storage units were a great addition to the extension and added a view into the office that we in the audience appreciated to suspend our disbelief.

Lighting and Sound I must say are the best managed and controlled that I have ever seen in theatre, and I am not exaggerating, I could hear every single word on stage, nobody off stage could be heard whispering, and aside from a minor break in the show due to a technical issue, the scene it was involved in carried on so slick and smoothly. A HUGE kudos to you for this as I find myself commenting on this the most in my reports.

Costume, Props, Hair and Make-Up were perfectly of the time and era you were going for. I loved the costumes specifically for Judy and Roz, which complemented their character well and gave us everything we wanted from a "dated" look. I must say that Judy's Dance of Death dress made me and my husband drop our jaws to the floor. Just WOW!

Direction by Russell Langdown was excellent. Pure excellence on stage. I know you dedicated this production to your dear friend, the late Sandra Gilbert, and she would have been delighted in what was produced in her memory. Everything mentioned in the report is down to you and your creative team.

Chorus Music Direction by Judith Sharp was also to a high standard. All chorus singing during the big numbers were excellent and you could hear the harmonies clearly. Only qualm from me is that I was missing the backing vocals for Heart to Hart, which I guess was a conscious choice, and Roz gave a great performance without them underneath her voice, but it was the only moment I felt could have used a little more substance underneath. Nevertheless, a great job done by all!

Choreography by Gemma Langdown was brilliantly done too, and not a single person looked out of place or like they didn't know the choreography. The needs and skills of all were taken into consideration and it is because of this that made the choreography look slick and well-rounded. Congratulations on all your hard work paying off.

Violet Newstead (played by Carrie-Jo Good), you gave an excellent start to the musical and held strong throughout the second song "Around Here" where you control the scene and the song. Your strong character acting went noticed by the audience and there wasn't a moment when we did not believe you were in control (even in that hospital scene). Your duet with Joe was beautiful and your voices melded together perfectly, giving a very beautiful rendition of a song often looked over in other productions. A great performance.

Doralee Rhodes (played by Katherine Cooke), don't ask me why, but I am always sceptical of people playing celebrities in musicals. I don't know what it is but sometimes people don't play them as well, so please excuse my prejudice. This being said, none of this applies to you, as your performance of Doralee was spectacular giving those Dolly-esque quirks and nods but still while you gave the character a bit of your own heart. I your "Backwards Barbie" was a lovely rendition of a song which shows true heart (or Hart) of Doralee and lets the audience in on what a genuine person she is. Very well done.

Judy Bernly (played by Emily Louise Baker), I have to start off by saying how lovely it is to see you playing this part. Having only seen you play Flo in Kipps last year, seeing you in this monster of a role is tremendous. The growth Judy had was a joy to see, going from a shy girl in "Around Here" to a strong woman in "Get Out and Stay Out" is incomparable. Your vocals in "Dance of Death" along with the dance moves were a highlight for me and I wanted to congratulate you on a great performance!

Franklin Hart (played by Matt Cremin), no matter who plays Hart in any production, it just makes you want to cringe. And to think this sort of behaviour still happens by prominent people (*achem* including the president *achem*) and I think your performance was a good representation of how this can happen in this society. There was an element of your performance which was rather camp, not necessarily a bad thing though, as it once again shows the metrosexual men who think that they can get away with anything just because they don't appear like the stereotypical "straight" man. So you definitely made the audience and I squirm throughout your performance as you did smarmy very well. So, well done? I think? Haha!

Roz Keith (played by Louise van der Watt), Roz is always a favourite of mine in this musical and your rendition of this very iconic character was not disappointing. You gave your all and laid it all bare (quite literally) for everybody to see. I don't know how you felt in that moment, but it thought it was very liberating, and whether it was a hurdle for you to get over or not it was still an excellent performance. The juxtaposition from little nerdy busybody Roz and the "Heart to Hart" Roz was HUGE, and I must commend you on this performance so really really well done.

Joe (played by Jarred Cremin-Bernard), yes Joe is a smaller part and doesn't get as many lines/songs. But you were on stage at every moment you possibly could. Your song with Violet was beautiful as I have mentioned before, but it is not with this duet that I want to commend. Your connection with your other male dance partner (Luke Browne) was a force to be reckoned with. Both of you were powerhouses and really gave your all in every dance you were in.

Moving on to the chorus and dancers, you clearly had a great time performing, and when looking at actually how many people were in the chorus it was surprising to me in the bows as the whole cast was much smaller than I felt it was whilst watching you perform. You all filled that space so well and spread into every single place you could never leaving the stage bare except when required. A musical is not a musical without a strong chorus, and that you were. So very well done.

In summary, 9 to 5 was a beautiful piece of theatre that lifted the spirits of all those in the packed auditorium and showed just how talented the people of SALOS really are. Very well done to you all and I hope you have a well needed rest before Evita.

Many thanks,
Angus Sheppard-Hughes

These comments solely reflect the view of the representative and can only relate to the performance seen.