

Theatre review by Aleesha Handel

Cole Porter's ANYTHING GOES

Presented by Ovation

Gatehouse Theatre until 29th January 2017

'Madcap antics aboard an ocean

liner bound from New York to London' is how this production is billed and it most certainly lives up to it.

Set during a 1934 New York east bound transatlantic crossing, ANYTHING GOES is an all singing, all dancing, slightly bizarre take on the classic story of boy meets girl. In this 1962 revision of the script, boy (Billy Crocker - a young Wall Street broker; played by Jack McCann) falls in love at first sight with girl (Hope Harcourt - an American debutant, played by Samantha Dorsey) after a chance encounter in a taxi. But rather than following a predictable plot line this story twists and turns with the help of a second rate gangster with a Tommy gun, disguises worthy of 'Allo 'Allo, a somewhat dubious oriental accent and a smidgen of seduction.

We are welcomed into the Gatehouse Theatre and immediately on board the deck of the S.S. American. With the stern at one end, a tiered bow the other and the audience either side, Emily Bestow has produced a deceptively simple but perfect stage for the action to take place. This is further enhanced by a video screen, bow side that displays real life photos of landscapes from the era and rippling ocean footage. Footage that was taken by the director John Plews himself, during his journey back to England from New York on the Queen Mary 2, having negotiated the deal to produce this very play.



The cast explode into their initial song with energy and from the first strike up of the six piece band, who were flawless throughout, the audience bopped their heads and had to resist the urge to sing along. A theme that continued throughout the whole production.

Applause must be given to the choreographer Chris Whittaker, who had the cast tapping, twirling and leaping with gusto. At some moments it

did seem as though the front row audience were rather too close for comfort, but the precision of movements meant that unlike Billy Crocker's journey aboard S.S. American everything went smoothly. A brilliantly casted production throughout however a special mention is to be given to Jack Keane playing Sir Evelyn Oakleigh. His portrayal of the classically repressed, often oblivious, upper class English twit was superb. In one particularly memorable scene Mr. Keane performed a morning workout routine and delighted the entire audience with his flair in physical comedy resulting in howls of laughter.

John Plews should be thrilled with what he has achieved here and it is evident that the knowledge gained during his ten years aboard cruise ships entertaining passengers has been put to good use. A well-executed production with plenty of fun and frivolity to get you through the January blues.

5 stars.