

## Cabaret - Oxted Operatic

Cabaret was one of the best shows I have seen at the Barn Theatre and a credit to everyone involved with it. The production was dedicated to three long-standing members of Oxted Operatic Society who have sadly passed away recently. Because of its excellence, no greater tribute to their memory could have been made.

The extension to the Barn Theatre that has resulted in more wing space will obviously be a great benefit to groups performing there, as was evident from this show. It allowed the use of double length trucks upon which the settings of two of the scenes could be mounted and these were moved quickly into position to ensure a smooth running production. This, together with excellent performances from the whole company, from the musicians to the efficient back stage crew, resulted in a superb presentation for which the Production Team of Martin Patrick, Carrie and Drew Brooke-Mellor must be delighted.

The stage settings designed suggested much of the seediness to be found in pre-war Germany with modestly furnished rooms in which Cliff and Fraulein Schneider lived and the falsely gay atmosphere of the Kit Kat Club to which the citizens of Berlin went for amusement, company and liaisons. Sets were dressed with suitable furniture and props and without doubt, the appearance of banners depicting the colours and insignia of the Nazi Party recalled to older members of the audience the unease and trepidation with which these were once regarded.

The band led by Drew Brooke-Mellor was on a raised area upstage and although in view throughout did not distract from what was happening on the stage below. On a couple of occasions whilst playing the first class score, their efforts prevented some words being spoken at tables on either side of the stage from being clearly heard.

Costumes were appropriate for the place and period with some seductive outfits for the Kit Kat Dancers who performed enthusiastically the routines devised by Carrie Brooke-Mellor including a strenuous kick routine with absolute precision.

All the principal roles were well played. Tim Wray, with only a trace of an American accent, portrayed Cliff Bradshaw, the writer who finds himself innocently involved in undercover operations being perpetrated by the fascists. In playing Sally Bowles, Kelly Beard captured the shallow, brittle nature of the good-time girl eking out an existence whilst falling under the influence of many doubtful characters. She sang all her vocal numbers well, culminating with

the show-stopping title song. Cliff's landlady was sensitively played by Christine White; a woman prevented from seeking happiness late in life by fears about the religious persecution to which her association with her suitor may lead. Her fears were expressed very eloquently in the song "What Would You Do?" That suitor was Herr Schultz, played by Ron White, another sympathetic, generous character whose life would soon be upturned by political events and who mused reflectively and with feeling the song "Married". Another of Fraulein Schneider's tenants was Fraulein Kost (Janette Summerfield), a young lady offering comfort to the much younger members of the German Navy, despite the efforts of others to dissuade her.

Bringing all these characters together was Emcee, the bi-sexual narra-



tor and a key figure for any Society tackling this piece, played quite brilliantly by James Gautrey, who set the mood for the evening with his splendidly rendered "Willkommen". His first entrance through the trap door added sinister facet to his interpretation and he took the same route after bidding farewell before the final curtain.

These principals were well supported by the rest of the cast, several of whom were required to double up. Included amongst them were a number of children who sang evocatively the Horst Wessel Song "Tomorrow Belongs to Me" and this number was reprised by the whole company to close the First Act.

Cabaret was a truly splendid effort and one for which everyone concerned with it are to be congratulated.

Reg Humby, NODA Representative

## The Travelling Lover

The Oxted Players' recent entry in the Betchworth Festival, *The Lover* by Harold Pinter, is to have another airing as an entry in a different Festival. The Shinfield Players Theatre, just outside Reading, had until recently always run a competitive one act Festival, but uncertainties over the future of the theatre caused the Festival to be discontinued. Happily, however, those uncertainties have now been resolved and the Festival has been revived, to run this year during the week ending Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> July.

The Festival organising committee have been very keen to attract new entries, with the result that they were quite prepared to agree to a request from the Oxted Players for a slot on the Saturday night, bearing in mind the difficulties we would have had in transporting cast, crew and set all the way to Reading during the working week when everybody involved would have been doing their "day jobs".

So, please check your diaries and see whether you would be able to come along and support a production which took prizes for Best Actor

and Best Stage Presentation at the Betchworth Festival – hopefully a coach party can be organised.

One interesting factor in the decision to enter the Shinfield Festival is the possibility of getting through to the next round – because the first round is being held so late in the year, the successful teams will have to wait for their second round performances until July 2004! This one could run longer than East Enders.....

Chris Hepher.

## Recent Lottery Winners:

February 2003

First Mr H O'Neil Second Mrs NR Sadler Third Mr C Thomas

March 2003

First Mr & Mrs P Budge Second Mrs SD Simpson Third Mr M Jacobs

April 2003

First Mrs A Kay Second Mr F Boonham Third Mrs J Dunlop