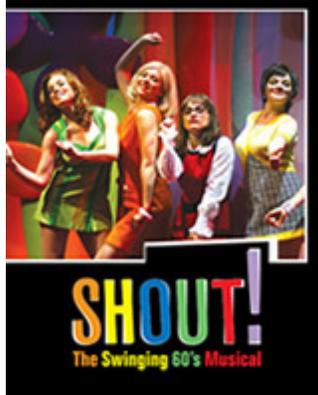


Shout! - New Wimbledon Theatre



Review by David Munro

SHOUT! is a joyous paean to the music of the 1960's and the sixties music culture. It is well staged, well sung and has a young cast who appear to relate completely to a period when most of them weren't even a twinkle in their mother's eye.

I say most of them advisedly as the featured players, Su Pollard and Claire Sweeney, have a tad more experience and years although one would never know it from the vigour and enthusiasm of their performances.

I refer to them as featured players rather than the stars they are, as this is a perfect example of a talented team working together; both of them join the chorus when one of the others are having their solo moment, in truth they are both "one of the girls" which adds to the zest and fun of the evening. Of course each has their moment or two and their professionalism creates the backbone of the show, showcasing the younger and very talented rest of the cast .

The cast in fact comprises six ladies and one man, Howard Jones, who adds the spice of contrast to the heady female brew. His function is to narrate the fragments of dialogue linking the songs and to announce the years within the decade and outline their significance. He sings and dances as well, bringing a welcome touch of humour from time to time to dispel the potential monotony of an evening songfest.

Su Pollard is Su Pollard, but although she too brings humour to the proceedings she does not overdo it although the zany touches she brings to her performance are a delight, as indeed is the pathos with which she tinged some of her solo numbers.

Claire Sweeney on the other hand gives a belt and zing to her numbers and to the ensemble when she steps back to give the others a chance. She does not hog the limelight but her personality is such that one cannot help but notice her even when she

is being self effacing. She handles her numbers superbly giving the old warhorses a new shine and lease of life.

As do Shona White and Donna Steele as the featured members of the ensemble which comprises them with the back up of Louisa Maxwell and Julie Stark who give sterling support.

As I have said, it is a team effort and in a sense it is invidious to single out songs and singers as everyone contributes in one way or another to the success of each individual number and of the evening as a whole. For this credit must be given to the director and choreographer, Bill Deamer, who has welded his talented cast into a magnificent whole (or seven!) and recreated successfully the spirit and feeling of the era. I was avid in my praise of his *Babes in Arms* at last year's Chichester Festival and this production only amplifies my admiration for his taste and skill.

There is virtually no setting, just banner screens and some props such as chairs which are brought forward from time to time, but the whole effect is none the less pleasing and is the work of Morgan Large who also was responsible for the costumes which successfully evoked the period without over emphasising it.

This production is presently on tour but I understand that it is destined for London later this year. Whether or not you are an aficionado of the sixties, this show is worth catching for the performances and the merit of its staging. It is in short a worthwhile "Shout"

The tour continues to Manchester, Birmingham, Grimsby, Torquay and Bristol.