

Guys and Dolls

Based on a story and characters
by Damon Runyon

by Frank Loesser, Jo Swerling and Abe Burrows

Berkeley Road South, Earlsdon, Coventry

Sat 3rd Dec - Sat 10th Dec 2011

Matinee Sat 10th Dec at 2.30pm

Performances start at 7.30 pm

The Criterion is an award winning theatre company

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Take back the mink - ambitious musical lands in Coventry

THE wow factor comes more in the second half of this hugely ambitious production by a 33-strong cast at the tiny Criterion Theatre.

With characters inspired by Damon Runyon and a score by Frank Loesser, the mechanics of this 60-year-old saga are as funny as they ever were. After all, just what does a high-rolling professional gambler have in common with a Salvation Army mission girl?

The answer's easy. He travels the country spending most of his time staying in hotel rooms where there's nothing to read. Except the Bible.

As hero Sky Masterson, Gareth Withers's voice gets stronger as the show progresses and he's on fire by the time he gets to Luck Be A Lady.

The same gradual build-up comes from Nicol Cortese, who plays the oh-so-correct Miss Sarah Brown. Both she and Gareth can sometimes stray off key but she's wonderful when she gets drunk in the Havana scene and totters about singing If I Was A Bell...

Then there's all those other songs: Fugue for Tin Horns – not the best version I've heard – I'll Know When My Love Comes Along, Sit Down, You're Rocking The Boat and Take Back Your Mink – this last one a cast sensation complete with basques and suspenders.

The humour never stops. And much of it comes from the New York slang of Miss Adelaide, delightfully played by Jan Nightingale, who has all the really great lines. She's the Hot Box dancer who's wasted so much time waiting around for Nathan Detroit to get round to marrying her that's she's developed a whole litany of psychological ailments - including a 14-year-long cold.

I liked Matt Sweatman's Nathan and his duets with Adelaide worked really well – particularly the heartfelt Sue Me, I thought John Fenner worked well as Nicely-Nicely Johnson and it was great to hear Keith Railton, of all actors, tackling a sentimental solo in his elder statesman role of Arvide.

But song of the night for me has to be Luck Be A Lady with Gareth backed by this strong male chorus.

As my all time favourite musical, this is a hard show to stage and the first act was slow to ignite. But after the break, the whole thing zings along and is a triumph for all at the Criterion.

Verdict: You'll be lucky to get a seat – this is already a virtual sell-out.

Barbara Goulden

Sarah Brown

Sky Masterson

Miss Adelaide

Nathan Detroit

Nicely-Nicely Johnson

Benny Southstreet

Rusty Charlie

Anvide Abernathy

General Matilda B. Cartwright

Agatha

Mimi

Mission Dolls

Lt. Brannigan

Harry the Horse

Angie the Ox

Nicol Cortese

Gareth Withers

Jan Nightingale

Matt Sweatman

John Fenner

Dean Stevens-Mullis

Mark Wiszowaty

Keith Railton

Anne Houston

Nicole Firth

Anne-marie Greene

Gennie Holmes

Olivia Holmes

Chris Ingall

Judy Murdoch

Doug Griffiths

Ken Reader

Lyn Redding

Big Jule

Society Max

Liver Lips Louie

Brandy Bottle Bates

Scranton Slim

Joey Biltmore

Hot Box Dolls

Waiter

Waiter

Cuban Dancers

Pete Brooks

Joe Fallowell

Pete Meredith

Michael Hammond

Lee Baillie

John Hathaway

Emma Withers, Anne-marie Greene

Stella Gabriel, Lucy Hayton

Lucy Rushton, Nicky Gabriel

Sara Farmanfarmai, Susie Murphy

Ben Lancashire

Matt Waters

Emma Withers, Joe Fallowell

Sara Farmanfarmai, Pete Meredith

Lucy Rushton, Lee Baillie

Director:

Annie Woodward

Musical Director:

Bill Bosworth

Stage Manager:

Ben Woodward

Director's Assistants:

Helen Withers, Liz Thompson

Choreographer:

Robin Stokoe

Set Design:

Karl Stafford

Lighting Design:

Karl Stafford

Lighting Operators:

Bill Butler, Hannah Barton

Sound:

Dave Cornish, Richard Taylor



