

Showboat succeeds with style

Review

Burton Operatic Society faced two snags in presenting *Showboat*. The group did not have a black singer with a voice like Paul Robeson, and using a white man blacked up is no longer acceptable.

The solution, engaging professional Colin Lainchbury-Brown to play Joe, gave the audience at de Ferrers High School last night the opportunity to hear a truly magnificent voice as he sang *Old Man River*.

I should be forgiven for wrongly supposing that the other black performer, Marika Ling as Queenie, was also a professional, so vivacious was she in a role which seemed written for her.

Showboat, by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II, helped break down racial barriers by pointing out their absurdity. It must have been a shocker when it was seen first in 1927.

It is amazing that one show should contain so many great songs, as timeless as they are tuneful.

Sally Hambling and Melvyn Edwards were perfectly cast as Magnolia, the *Showboat* captain's daughter and Gaylord, the Mississippi gambler who won her heart. Their duets, *Only Make Believe*,

You Are Love and *Why Do I Love You* were highspots of the show. I so loved the singing of Jane Haywood as Julie that I was sorry the storyline banished her from much of the action.

As Cap'n Andy, master of the *Showboat*, Ivan Green made the most of the chance to display his versatility, especially in the scheme in which he enacts several characters from a play. The four dancers, Pat Blood, Rebecca Mallinson, Melanie Stevenson and Sonia Storr contributed enormously to the success as did the 15-strong orchestra.

Then there was the brief but moving appearance of scene-stealing eight-year-old Lynsey Edwards as Kim, a part she shares during the week with Andrea Hanshaw. The first encounter of the wayward Gaylord with Kim, the daughter he did not know he had, was a tear-jerker. If there was a dry eye in the house it wasn't mine.

Showboat continues until Saturday but only a few matinee seats remain.
— Dave Stacey.



● Pictured are cast members (back, l-r) Barbara Roberts, Nigel Haywood, Louise Evanson, Melvyn Edwards and Sally Hambling; (front) Ivan Green, Markia Ling, Colin Lainchbury-Brown.
Picture: Neil Barker