

Wharfedale & Airedale Observer

Rachel O'Connor reviews Stampede's Sweeney Todd at Yeadon Town Hall 05 March 2009

This was another rip-roaring success for Stampede Theatre Company.

They keep on pushing the boundaries and taking risks and they are to be admired for it. Filling seats is what amateur theatre is mainly about, particularly with the rising costs of staging a show, but Stampede show the same confidence in their off-stage selection of works to perform, which don't always initially have a broad appeal, as they do on stage.

Sweeney Todd had them biting their nails when early indications were that ticket sales were low but on the opening night a steady stream of on-the-night bookers at the box office must have given them a boost.

Stampede have a quality about all their work that makes you go back time and again even if the subject matter is not to your taste, the music is at times difficult and the storyline none too cheery.

It is the sheer professionalism of this outfit that continues to draw the crowds and is bringing in a host of new, younger theatregoers to the ancient Town Hall.

They have built up a superb ensemble that carries any of their work through with its vibrancy and solid singing but then again they have several individuals who can hold an audience and command a stage.

Individuals such as Richard Lloyd, who once again scored an outstanding success in the title role of Sweeney Todd, and Marie Carter was a superb Mrs Lovett.

Full of pathos and humour, making a grisly tale a thing of laughter but at the same time putting us off pork pies for life.

One would not be surprised if pork pie sales at Yeadon's butchers' shops this week had taken a nosedive!

Former X Factor star Luke Bayer, Ben Tomlinson, Adam Folkard, Anthony Gilmartin, Caroline Bright, Kara Bayer and Bruce Sturrock have all become assured performers on the local stage proving that there is not a weak link to be found in any Stampede production.

This was another superb Royston Bayfield production with the excellent Tom Kyle as musical director dealing with this difficult piece in masterly fashion.