



ROSE BOWL ADJUDICATION

Name of Company: Bristol Musical Youth Productions

Name of Production: Chicago (Teen edition)

Venue: Olympus Theatre Bristol

Date: Friday November 7th 2025

Adjudicator: Ross Harvey

PRESENTATION

I've always seen this impressive company at the increasingly costly (and perhaps hostile to visiting companies) Redgrave in Bristol, so it was a pleasant surprise to see them at this excellent venue. A theatre where actors and audience both have space and comfort! Given the time of year, there was a large, organised firework display just getting going as I arrived and I wondered if there might be some additional, unscripted explosive sound effects throughout the evening – luckily for all this Chicago did not have any extraneous bangs to disturb. The set was open plan with a rear walkway accessed stage left and right by some steep looking steps. It had an Art Deco feel too. Useful to have the multi level structure and it was used well throughout adding to the visual impact. There was a central upstage entrance and the usual side wing entrances. This venue provided a large playing area which was used superbly for the big numbers. The show pre-set had a really effective and atmospheric hanging mist that seemed to linger as the large audience took their seats. The company were using backing tracks for the production so no need for a band pit which must have afforded even more playing space for the 28 strong cast. The original show opened in 1975 and is firmly set in roaring twenties Chicago. Large spotlights each side of the stage added a touch of period. Stage Management led by Simon Coghlan-Forbes was

slick and unobtrusive – with the cast moving furniture and set items with speed and efficiency.

TECH AND EFFECTS

With a show that has 28 production numbers, the tech plot for this production was well cued and executed throughout. The lighting was excellent. Sharp cues and nice LED colour washes created atmosphere. The follow spot operation was good and was accurate. All of which was good work from the Hughes team at Red Boat Lighting, especially the crimson wash for Cell Block Tango. Sound design by Martin Harper was very good with a balanced mix of head mic's and tracks. As always with these mics, a few were slow to fade up resulting in some lines lost but not with any consequences. Props were in keeping with the period and I liked the highly mobile prison bars – simple design and highly effective.

WARDROBE by Anne Holgate and Jenny Langham

The costumes were perfectly period – brightly coloured flapper outfits across the cast but I also liked the variation – the leather look trousers and vivid shaded suit jackets for the lads. The murderesses were nicely contrasted in their black and the two principal guys in their DJ and expressive jackets. Hats were good too and worn with style. It all looked great and really enhanced the numbers and visual impact of the show.

HAIR AND MAKEUP by Anne Holgate and Jenny Langham

There were many wigs in play here – all looking exactly right for the 20's. The principals had some serious routines to undertake so those hairstyles needed to stay in place and they certainly did. Wig care is an important part of a show. The cast looked very at ease with them – not always easy when you've rehearsed for weeks without them. Make up looked appropriate too.

MUSICAL DIRECTION by Tom Jones

This is a musically complicated show for the performer and here you crafted a fine company performance. There are many technically difficult songs in this but goodness you really delivered some fine vocal performances. The harmonies were nicely balanced and numbers like Me and My Baby, When

You're Good To Mama, Razzle Dazzle and a characterful Mister Cellophane were standout. Great work.

DIRECTION AND CHOREOGRAPHY by Vicki Klein

This was a highly and dare I say, expertly choreographed production throughout – that Fosse style of dance that is essential was there in plenty. A great Fan Dance too! The cast delivered so many big numbers with style and panache. Then additionally as if that wasn't enough, you handled the direction too! It's usually a role for two creatives for workload alone, but here you really created a terrific production. The pace was swift throughout and you allowed the cast to develop their characters with a reality and style of the period. As young people in a Teen version it could have been a gentle piece theatre, but you and the cast brought a maturity to the piece which worked really well. You created an atmospheric and memorable show.

CAST

Velma Kelly played by Evie Coghlan-Forbes

This was a highly accomplished performance of this brassy and confident performer. I liked the swaggering approach of being the top dog. The vocals were strong and the accent unwavering. The performance of 'I can't Do It Alone' was terrific. Well done.

Roxie Hart played by Heidi March-Smith

This was a standout performance for me. You brought a real sense of Roxie's struggle to escape the ordinary for a life in lights. The characterisation was solid and the accent was perfect. The dancing was good too – triple threat! You delivered some wonderful vocals not least of all Me And My Baby. Fine work.

Billy Flynn played by Elliott Wicks

You really captured the charismatic style of Mr Flynn. You also had the poise and control of being the number one lawyer in town. There was a confidence to your performance that added the necessary maturity to the role. You balanced both the charm and unsavoury side of him without going into caricature – good vocals too - Razzle Dazzle worked well.

Amos Hart played by Bob Steggle

This was another impressive performance. I liked the way you played this humble, decent and devoted man with just the right level of pathos without

becoming the victim. Vocally and acting wise, Mr Cellophane was beautifully performed. Good work.

Mamma Morton Mary played by Daisy Bullock

This was a strong and mature performance. You captured the strength and uncompromising corruptness of the warden perfectly. I liked the powerful and rasping vocal you brought to her big number. Impressive.

Mary Sunshine played by Bella Douglas

A nice performance of this optimistic and gullible journalist. You had a light touch with the dialogue and We Both Reached For The Gun was very entertaining.

Fred Casely played by Rory Hockett

These smaller roles often carry the most significance. It could be said that no Fred, no show – you made the most of the character and had a nice line in dead body acting....

**Murderesses played by Kitty Stuart-Hunt, Polly Naughton , Bea Kohn
Alex Hook, Amber Sharrock**

As a group, you were all highly important to the success of this show. The style and sass that you brought to the cell block really was impressive and beguiling. So many big numbers that were performed with style and aplomb. I liked the individual details like the accent of Hunyak and the knowing delivery of each story in Cell Block Tango, each taking their moment to share. Great.

**Ensemble Murderesses played by Roxy Kenna and Caitlin Chambers
Kitty played by Lucy Gillingham, Harrison played by Paddy Parminter
Clerk played by Luke Elliott, Judge/Fogarty played by Ben Partridge
Ensemble played by Aysel Shalaby, Ellena Horne, Helena Steggle, Abi Latimer,
Bryony Chesneau, Dulcie Smithson, Lottie Jarvis, Lily Gay, Alba Smallman,
Otilie Stuart-Hunt**

This is a show that is very dependent on the collective contribution of the entire cast. In the larger scenes it is really important to be focussed and in the moment. You did this really well. The musical numbers are complex and with multiple parts and yet you all seemed to embrace the challenge – The level of musicality and dance in this company is very impressive.

This company seems to have unlimited talent on and off stage and comfortably rises to challenging shows. This was an ambitious production that really delivered. It had a style and energy that was infectious. Well done BMYP and thank you for your welcome and I look forward to seeing more from this dynamic company. RH