



Having previously enjoyed *Nativity!* - Top Box's collaboration with Vocalize, I was keen to see what their adult Theatre Company would make of *Little Shop of Horrors*. So it was with a keen sense of anticipation that I arrived at the recently re-opened Greig Hall (what a pleasure to visit such a welcoming, revitalised venue) for the show. I was not to be disappointed, as the talented young cast put on an exceptionally good performance - full of energy and wit, and sung to a very high standard throughout.

*Little Shop of Horrors* is the rather gruesome tale of a flesh-eating plant which literally falls from space into an unsuspecting community, where it is taken in by the hapless Seymour Krelborn. As it happens, Seymour works at a struggling florist, and it isn't long before Audrey II (named after the co-worker on whom Seymour has a crush) is pulling in the punters. But the plant has an insatiable appetite, and the play ends in a grimly farcical denouement, with the entire principal cast having been consumed by the growing monster, which by that point fills half the stage.

It's a great musical, and the cast threw themselves into the material with gusto. This was an opportunity for the core Top Box team who work with director Tracy Wright to show what they could do, and I must say they took it with both hands! George Evans hit just the right note as the shy, bumbling Seymour, showing the charm beneath the awkwardness and making it very believable that his beloved Audrey could fall for him. Lucy Traves was excellent as Audrey (the human version!) - suitably ditsy yet supportive, and showing off a great singing voice. George and Lucy had good onstage chemistry - their duet in 'Suddenly Seymour' was a highlight - a great song, expertly delivered to hit exactly the right emotional note.

Georgie Pearce not only acted as choreographer and assistant musical director (along with Lucy), but also played Ronnette, one of the trio of singers that act as a Greek Chorus to the story. Accompanied by Connie Dodd as Crystal and Lilymae Lev as Chiffon, the three of them made light work of the fifties-style songs that lend this musical such wonderful period colour. Further excellent support was provided by Aidan McGrath as florist Mr Mushnik (brilliantly funny in the song 'Mushnik and Son'), and Sam Goldingay, who brought a genuine air of controlling menace to the role of Orin Scrivello, the sadistic dentist from whom Seymour must rescue Audrey.

As the voice of Audrey II, Ben Adams delivered a superb performance - exactly right in tone and style - it was nice to see him in person on stage for the final song. A word also for Kieran Teague, who combined the role of Audrey II puppeteer with an ensemble role in the group of winos (alongside Charlie Forman, Joe Bird and Paula Lilburn), all of whom added good colour to the street scenes.

The stage was filled with a very good set, which was well lit. The costumes were also good and appropriate for the period and characters - I particularly appreciated nice touches like the matching Converse footwear for the trio. Audrey II moved seamlessly through several iterations and was very effectively managed - it's strangely fun to watch this character (and it is a character) gobbling up the cast as the show progresses!

This was a show in which great singing, acting (with excellent American accents throughout) and choreography came together to provide the audience with a fantastic evening's entertainment. Good energy and pace were kept up throughout – what can I say but well done Tracy and team. I can't wait to see what this impressive young company does next!

Chris Davies