



**Society** : Stage Works Summer School (ROS)  
**Production** : Fame Jr.  
**Date** : 28<sup>th</sup> July 2012  
**Venue** : Winston Churchill Theatre, Ruislip  
**Report by** : Harvey Kesselman

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## Report

How do they do it? Take a group of fifty young performers, aged between Eight and Sixteen, audition them on a Sunday, and in one week put on a show, with them knowing their dialogue, songs and dance routines. Fantastic!! Puts some amateur companies, using adults, to shame.

This adaptation of 'Fame' has been recently written as a junior version leaving out some of the more salacious material found in both the film of 1980 and the TV series that followed. Subsequently there has been a 'cleaned up version' played on Broadway and several productions that have been successful in London.

As an introduction to the show, and to give the really young members their chance to shine, the Director had cleverly written a prologue using extracts from various shows that were being played during the 80's, allowing these young performers to hold the limelight for a while. So we were treated to a wonderful duet given by two of the youngest, smallest performers in the cast. **Anna Goraya** and **Jessica Larkman**, showing little stage fright, sang their duet, 'Tomorrow' from 'Annie', with confidence and were rightly given a great ovation. **Connor Quinn**, **Nathaniel Faulls**, **Max Alexander**, **Mason Bailey** and **Tom Booth** (replacing **Aaron Green**, who sang in the quintet in the first performance) sang 'Yankee Doodle Dandy'; **Jasmine Baragwanath**, **Rosie Castle** and **Charlotte Ward** sang 'Do, Ray, Me' from 'The Sound of Music'; a poem, 'Uncle Dave' performed by **Tom Booth** (Aaron Green in the first performance); 'Consider yourself' from 'Oliver' sung by **Ronnie Morgan**, **Aidan Summerfield**, **Ed Britter**, **Henry Middleton** and **Adam Mir**; there was a nice ballet routine given by **Mandy Argent**. Every one of these young performers seemed confident and all received enthusiastic applause from the audience. The adjudicators for these auditions were Miss Jordan, played by **Rebecca Maleney** and Mrs. Fowler, **Alice Bailey**. Because there were so many in the company, it was decided, as with previous shows, to double cast the main principals, making certain that whoever had been chosen as a principal, when not playing the part, would be in the chorus, thus giving more individuals an insight as to what is involved in being a principal.

Having got the auditions over, the curtains opened to reveal a simple but very clever set. At the back of the stage there had been erected a staircase on both stage right and left leading up to a raised walkway connecting these staircases. Entrances could be made from the space beneath the raised platform as well as down stage right and left. Seeing the whole company on stage, moving around made the whole scene look busy and exciting. This excitement continued throughout the whole show, with the audience becoming really involved in all that was happening.

The company's opening, 'Hard Work' was sung with great enthusiasm, something that continued throughout the show. All the company numbers, 'Hard Work', 'Sophomore' 'Junior Year', 'Senior Year' and of course 'Fame', were tackled with great energy. The first solo 'I want to make Magic' sung in the first act by **Alec Coles-Aldridge** as Nick and repeated by **Elliott Parsons** in the second act, telling of their hopes for the future, was very good. The soloists all did extremely well and, in all the songs that included the chorus, showed how well they had been taught. **Katie Riches** was a lively Carmen, her song, with the company, 'There she goes', with a great dance routine was very good and, although **Rachel Moore** in act 2 had no solo, in her acting, she was fine. Joe, played by **Evan Bevis-Knowles**, was a drama student who had some very funny dialogue and had a 'thing' for Carmen. We had a spirited Serena in both acts, **Abby Dearing** in the first act and **Jaime Parsons** in the second. Abby sang 'Let's play a love scene' with great feeling and Jaime, who with Nick (Elliott) in that act sang 'I want to make magic' delightfully, together with the whole company.

There was then a delightful duet between Schlomo, **Ollie Mclaughlan** and Carmen (Abby) in the first act and repeated in act 2 with **Sean Sullivan** as Schlomo together with Serena (Jaime), Nick (Elliott) and company. **Emily Pidgeon** as Lambchops, was a music student who was in the 'band' with Schlomo, together with Goody, played by **William Simons**. In act one, **Vicky Fischbacher** as Miss Sherman, was a firm, no nonsense Principal at the stage school and we had Ms. Bell the Dance Teacher, played by **Olivia Brennand** who ended the act with a fierce argument about various students. Both gave quite strong performances. There were several other principals who, although they had no solos to sing, did have some dialogue that played an important part in the proceedings. **Chris Knapp's** dialogue as Mr Myers, the Acting Teacher, was clear and well projected; **Louie Swallow** played Mr Sheinkopf, was quite convincing as the Music Teacher. All the singing in this first act was very good, the dialogue in some cases was not as clear as it should have been, but the dance routines were excellent.

There were, however, in act 2 two characters that were not featured as soloists in the first act. Tyrone and Mabel. Tyrone, a rather complex person who had to admit his reading was not up to scratch, was played by **Callum Poltock**, and **Glen Scott**. Both gave excellent interpretations of a teenager who seemed at first to find things difficult, but eventually found, by making an effort, he could assimilate with others at the school. Whilst Callum had no solo in his act, his dialogue said it all, the frustration, and the difficulty in fitting in. A good solid performance. Glen had a wonderful number to perform in act 2; 'Dancing on the sidewalk', together with the full company and was a brilliant number and extremely well done. In act one **Heather Malone** played Iris and, although she had no solo in that act, her dialogue was important in that when **Georgia Nicholls** took over the part in act 2, she, as Iris, was able to help Tyrone with his reading and subsequently with his exams. Then we had Mabel. Although **Hollie Summerfield** as Mabel in act one had no solo, she did have dialogue and was, like Callum, important to the story. Then in the second act, there was **Hanny Alcock** as Mabel. This 11 year old girl almost stole the show with her performance in 'Mabel's Prayer'. There is no need to say what she was praying for but, being at a stage school, one could imagine what it was. It was so good, and the whole company accompanying her added to the enjoyment of this number.

The whole of the second act went with a swing, with some wonderful dancing, good songs, well performed. In this act the whole company was involved and the final rendition of 'Fame' nearly brought the house down. There were many more on the stage besides those already mentioned and, because everyone who was involved made a great contribution to its success, here are those names: **Lucy Newton**, **Georgia Bradberry**, **Ashleigh Gabriel**, **Alice Green**, **Tilly Lewis**, **Esme Porter**, **Maddy Franklin**, **Katie Turner**, **Tori Hodges** and **Amy Fox**.

There were so many good things about this production. Not only did it get young people involved, but showed everyone what could be achieved in such a short time by a group of dedicated people, written in the programme as 'The Team'. The cast had learned and performed some wonderful dance routines; all the hand and arm movements were as one. The acrobatics some of the boys did were simply amazing. Occasionally some of the dialogue was perhaps not as clear or well projected. All the young principals were so good and their hard work paid off. Seeing these young performers, obviously enjoying themselves gives some hope for the future of the amateur stage, and perhaps even the professional stage too.

My heartiest congratulation, to **Roy Mathers** as Musical Director, whose input could be heard on the stage, to Drama Coach **Helen Bailey** whose help and advice to these young performers paid off, **Richard Fairhead** as assistant MD also played an important part in coaching the cast with the music, Set designer, **Alan Bailey** for his simple, but effective set. And to all others back stage, technical crew, make-up and costume people etc. all of whom had been an important part in this production. I hope I will be forgiven for not mentioning all the individual names, but listing them all would take up even more room!!

Finally my sincere congratulations to the Director and Choreographer, **Ann Hertler-Smith**, whose imagination, very hard work and her dedication to the Stage Works Summer School is amazing. Having seen three of their previous productions, I have to say, this one was the best.