

Society : JULIAN LIGHT OPERATIC SOCIETY (JLOS)
Production : THE GONDOLIERS
Date : 18 OCTOBER 2025
Venue : QUESTORS THEATRE
District : 2
Report : Pam Armstrong Regional Councillor London

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[Show Report](#)

It was a delight to attend JLOS production of The Gondoliers. Thank you for the warm welcome I received from Edwin Owen who led your Front of House Team and also from your Team members generally who are always so friendly. Although I had not anticipated writing your Show Report, it is a delight to do so.

Music This excellent 12 piece orchestra was under the most capable baton of James Naylor who enabled the musicians to display their music well – what a pleasure it was to listen to them. James also arranged the overture for this production of the Gondoliers who aimed to “capture the energy, colour and sheer fun of opera” in which he succeeded most ably. The thrust stage had been foreshortened to a square with the orchestra in front and was an excellent use of stage.

The female ensemble entered in their lovely, colourful costumes and they beautifully ‘dressed’ the stage, setting the scene well. I did notice that spectacles were being worn inappropriately, on stage and this should be discouraged. The singing by the female ensemble was lovely, being on point and well controlled. There was good movement across the stage by the ensemble, creating interest.

Ten **male ensemble** entered, all of whom were most suitably dressed. Mention must be made of Antonia (Phillip Lewis), Francesco (Martin Jarvis) and Giorgio (Alan Whitworth) who embraced their roles and gave sterling and enjoyable performances. The Chorus and Soloists set the opening scenes so well.

It is always difficult to bring on to stage a boat that is meant to be on water, however, the stage crew handled this difficult manoeuvre well and the Gondola was duly present on stage.

Marco (Ben Hancox-Lachman) and Giuseppe (Alex Kirstukas) had a very good relationship which worked excellently, and their lovely voices blended so well together. They both brought their considerable acting skills to these roles, playing off each other and developing the roles with vigour and humour – a joy to watch. The Gondolieri Duet was just beautifully sung, with humour and panache. The duet of the two Gondoliers when they alternated in singing every other word, was so well done – this number was delivered to perfection – congratulations on excellent performances. .

The **Females** made up to the two of them in a suitably coquettish fashion. Fiametta (Jennifer Lack), Vittoria (Katie Frodsham), Giulia (Claire Doran) and Inez (Maureen Fitzpatrick-Browne) immersed themselves into their characters and delivered the most delightful performances. In the ‘choosing a bride’ scene, the choreography of the females going round in circles was most effective and created interest.

Arrival of the Duke of Plaza-Toro (Paul Clarke) was well handled and the choreography surrounding the entrance and wife and daughter really enhanced the scene. The Duchess, who was a delight to watch, a most dissatisfied wife most ably performed by Sunita Dugal, was a good foil to her daughter, Casilda (Gina Carmello) (who was in love with Luiz (Chris Petitt)) – the three of them had lovely voices which blended so well. What a joy to see G&S performed so well. The Duke also sang a comedy number, which was delivered with panache and just the right fun – together with simple and effective choreography.

I liked the way in which Casilda and Luiz blended so well together introducing a nice sense of humour.

Luiz had a gentle, tenor voice which at times was a bit overwhelmed by the orchestra, but it came over very well nevertheless – when Luiz let his voice soar, it was charming. Casilda had a very strong, soprano voice. These two sung a most delightful duet, with their voices soaring and delivering with passion.

The Grand Inquisitor, Don Alhambra Del Bolero (Stephen Roe) brought all his acting skills to the fore when he tried to make up to Casilda and portrayed a suitably unsavoury character. His excellent, black costume enhanced his character and he brought a good comedic attitude to his identity. He delivered his song very well indeed and most definitely in character. Stephen portrayed the Inquisitor as comedic and sinister all in one – what good characterisation. Together with Marco and Giuseppe, he delivered his song *There lived a King*, what a delight, and the Inquisitor's bass voice really suited these comedic numbers. In Act 2, although the Inquisitor lusts after Casilda, he can't resist pinching Tessa's bottom – this was a nice comedic touch – forgive the pun !

Gianetta (Stephanie Laishley) had a lovely, strong singing voice and she acted very well through singing. Tessa (Julie Caplan) had a charming voice and gave a delightful performance of *When a Merry Maiden Marries*, into which she brought good characterisation. The Quartet of a Regular Royal Queen (Tessa, Gianetta, Marco, Giuseppe) – told the story with verve and humour – very well performed with good choreography. The farewell to Marco and Giuseppe was a charming number beautifully delivered

Finale of Act 1 was so well delivered by the whole cast - with voices soaring it was a strong and excellent finish to the first half – well done.

The set change for Act 2 was efficiently handled and we viewed the Palace with its lovely arches, which was most effective.

Opening Act 2 – *Of happiness the very pith* delivered by the male ensemble together with Marco and Giuseppe – good courtier costumes were on display – it was very effective. The two Kings were washing the stage and it set up the scene nicely.

Giuseppe and the male chorus delivered *Rising early in the Morning* with good humour and Giuseppe got his tongue around the “twisters” excellently – he certainly had good stage presence

Much is expected from *Take a Pair of Sparkling Eyes* what a wonderful voice Marco had to deliver this number – his voice just soared and was very powerful – absolutely lovely

The Ladies arrive in *Here we are at the risk of our lives* and the two Queens arrive – this was a good comedy moment with the bucket.

Dance a chachucha was an excellent song with good choreography – nice and lively

The Quartet (Gianetta, Tessa, Marco, Giuseppe) for *In a contemplative fashion* started quietly and moved on to being delivered with some passion and anger. Excellent interpretation of the number – it had good choreography and there was lovely delivery by all performers -

With Ducal Pomp The men's chorus line up looked really good. The entrance of the Duke and Duchess was most impressive and the wig was excellent. Casilda arrives. The Duke portrays this lovely character so well and in a suitably understated fashion. The Duchess clearly rules the Duke and sang beautifully *On the day when I was wedded* – she gets over her character as a harridan very well.

Small titles and Orders duet with Duke and Duchess was beautifully delivered in character – their excellent costumes enhancing their roles.

When the two kings enter, the Duke tries to teach them how to behave with the song *I am a courtier brave and serious*. The Duke is perfectly diffident and the two kings act as one superbly. Nice choreography during the song. The Choreography throughout has been very good indeed.

Mention must be made of the quintet *Here is a case unprecedented* - this displayed the singers voices so well (Casilda, Marco, Giuseppe, Gianetta and Tessa) and they injected much humour into the number – so nice

The finale Act 2 was a most lively number and brought this most enjoyable evening to a close.

It was a delight to see G&S performed with such confidence, verve and talent

Martin Jarvis not only designed an excellent set but he also built and painted the scenery, including the lovely Venice skyline and the impressive Palace. This was no mean feat, however, he added to this the skills of a shipwright, constructing a moving gondola and ensuring this got onto stage smoothly as if on water. Well done for bringing this vision to life for the audience. The costumes were bright, colourful and really enhanced the show. Zena Wigram clearly had imagination and fun in directing and choreographing this production and talented cast, and her passion for G&S shone through at every stage.

Congratulations JLOS on an excellent production.

Pam Armstrong

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