



Some of that old wartime spirit in Hungerford

Ref: 08-2808F

# Blast from the past

Wartime musical was a great team effort by Hungerford's community theatre company

"TWICE as loud and twice as long as the real thing," said Noel Coward, rather humorously, of Lionel Bart's original 1962 production of *Blitz!* Not true of TCHTC's lively and entertaining presentation, although the explosions and sound effects certainly had us jumping in our seats.

Simply, it was a chirpy story of the good old-fashioned British indomitable spirit during the Second World War bombings in London. It focused on two families, the Jewish Blitzteins and the cockney Lockes. Mrs Blitztein and Alfred Locke are forever at each other's throats, underpinning that were serious issues of racism, prejudice, desertion and the terrible tragedies of war.

From the atmospheric opening number, *Our Hotel*, sung in the underground station, *Blitz!* moved onto stirring and humorous pastiche wartime music and ballads in the 1960s musical vernacular. Director David Clayton had a huge cast to work with and each played an important part in the success of the show.

It was an ambitious choice, but with imaginative use of the stage and

## Theatre

The Community of Hungerford Theatre Company: *Blitz!*, at John O'Gaunt School, Hungerford, from Wednesday, February 20 to Saturday, February 23

auditorium, and super performances from the children, chorus and good principals, it was a great team effort.

Paul Hyde, as Alfred Locke, gave a strong and completely convincing performance and Charlotte Shanahan, as Carol Blitztein, handled her role well, gaining our sympathy as it turned to tragedy.

There were spirited performances from James Olney (Harry Blitztein) and

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Kristian Lopez (Georgie Locke), the two sons of the squabbling parents, and among a host of good character roles, notable was Karen Ashby as Elsie.

But *Blitz!* was a vehicle for Mrs Blitztein who had several stirring numbers and was the mainstay of the show. Hungerford were blessed with the very talented Helen Bonner, every bit the Jewish momma, who delivered her numbers with strength and style.

The choreography, by Tara Burden, was creative, well-pitched and executed, and the costumes were terrific, perfectly evoking the wartime period. The admirable lighting and sound effects made a vital contribution and the set worked well. The orchestra, if a little hesitant in places on the first night, delivered good accompaniment.

There were many highs and a few lows, but this show was a fantastic choice for the company, giving great scope to use a vast array of ages and talents together.

What a blast.  
TREVOR DOBSON



And spirited performances from the cast of amateur actors

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