



ROSE BOWL ADJUDICATION

Name of Company: Clevedon School
Name of Production: Made in Dagenham
Venue: Clevedon School Hall
Date: 10 December 2025
Adjudicator: Chris Howland-Harris

INTRO

Putting on a production of *Made in Dagenham* comes with many challenges such as balancing light comedy and political drama, managing large ensemble staging, and recreating multiple scenes from the late 1960s. The latter can be particularly tricky for an amateur production however Clevedon School truly rose to these challenges.

STAGING

The staging began before we entered the hall, as members of the cast walked about in costume and played up to their role to engage with the audience. Upon doors open we were similarly guided to our seats by enthusiastic factory workers who seemed genuinely pleased and excited to be there, all in character, as was the amusing voiceover before timely curtain up.

The performance was on floor level with audience seated to three sides in a thrust style of staging. To the rear of the stage area was a wall made of movable panels made to look like brick and steel and allowed various pieces of props and scenery to come on and off stage. There were entrances at the

extremes of this backing from which cast and set pieces manifested as needed, an arrangement that allowed for swift and smooth appearance of props and cast. Changes were particularly well done with performance and characterisation continuing from cast and crew any time they were visible to the audience, whether in the background or the sides or taking on and off scenery pieces, and had an easy flow which kept up the energy on stage. This was but one of many signs of both good, clear, sensitive instruction from the Directors and a lot of practice and hard work on behalf of cast and crew. It was apparent that everyone, including ensemble, took their role and their part seriously and without scripted lines still performed, often with mouthed or *sotto voce* dialogue, and all without drawing focus inappropriately.

Sound was generally handled well and although some lines were not clearly amplified, the radio mics mostly behaved themselves. Having the pit at the rear of the hall is very sensible positioning as I have been to many productions where the band drowns out the sound of the performers, and even here I wouldn't have amplified the band as the front facing speakers occasionally overwhelmed the singers. However, the band was definitely worth hearing because the musicians performed extremely well, most expressive and with few timing errors, with the brass section outstanding for all the right reasons.

Sound effects were used very well and with subtlety, a good example being the background sound for the sewing machinists as particularly effective and set the scene without being obvious. Lighting was equally well planned with good touches such as the uplighters at the wings that allowed safe movement between scenes as well as painting the set, and when used to pull focus alternately on Rita and Eddie in the kitchen scene. And then to top this we had a stage pyro in the form of a Gerb at the rear of the stage during *Made in Dagenham*.

Props were excellent and suggested that a lot of thought and research had gone into the 60s style, so nothing stood out as incongruous. The décor of the O'Grady's kitchen, particularly that shade of orange, was particularly reminiscent of the era, the machinists' suitcases were well sourced, and the sewing machines were simple but very effective and well designed so as to be easily moved on and off stage. This attention to detail also extended to the costumes which were very well designed and produced, and the hairstyles such as Clare's blonde flick, all adding to the late 60s ambience.

While all of these are somewhat technical aspects of the production, what most impressed me was the overall direction. It was very pleasing for the programme credits to indicate both teachers and students taking a role in the direction as without doubt all involved had spent an awful lot of rehearsal blocking, timing, leading, and enthusing the cast. Everyone was engaged and seemed to know their part in all senses of the word, and no one on stage appeared to consider themselves merely an extra. Every prop and piece of scenery was brought onstage or moved off with some interaction between those handling the item, whether large or small, even the stools were placed with seemingly ad-libbed yet natural conversation. I particularly appreciated the background acting in the Berni Inn as Monty tucks into his steak and chips while waiting staff interacted with diners and each other. Casting was also highly successful including a particularly good relationship on stage between Amy Reed and Giovanni Bianchi.

Choreography was consistently strong throughout. The routines were full of energy, performed with enthusiasm, and well designed for the range of ages and abilities involved. The Dancers performed their steps with poise and delight, it was pleasing to see the inclusivity within the dance, and the pyramids and tumble during the cheerleading routine was particularly impressive. Everywhere we looked there were entertaining touches, from the entrance of the ensemble in sunglasses, to a lovely bit of Air Guitar action.

CAST

I much regret that it is impossible to pass comment on every one of more than 30 cast members, so I have limited myself to those students that particularly stood out for their performance, or for whom there were little moments that were particularly notable. Please be assured that none of the cast gave a poor performance.

AMY REED was simply outstanding as Rita O'Grady. Her physical and vocal performance showed a real talent, she performed to the whole audience, she had excellent timing of her lines, movement on stage, and expression within her speaking and singing voice that held sustain and variation. One of Amy's greatest strengths in performance was that you could see on her face the thoughts in her head, this especially through her opening lines of the *Everybody Out* montage. If Amy chose to pursue a path into performing arts, I imagine that she would be very successful.

CHARLOTTE GREEN as Beryl was a really strong character, and while Beryl was obviously meant to be somewhat salacious, Charlotte delivered the innuendo in her lines with subtlety.

ZEE MAJOR as Connie Riley was clear with a touching sincerity to her lines and lovely singing voice that drew emotion as she performed *Connie's Song* beautifully. Unlike most of the other parts, the role of Connie is not a caricature and so is required to be played straight. The earnestness that Zee brought meant that her character's death in Act Two was all the more poignant.

EMILY CHAMBERS as Sandra Beaumont got off to a powerful solo start with her "I want..." lines in *This is What We Want* and continued her time on stage always looking confident, bringing a strength and enthusiasm to her part.

XANTHE LARNER as Clare had a great appearance, played the archetypal "ditzy blonde" with wonderful innocence and naivety, but also an ironic twinkle in her eye. She delivered her song *Wossname* brilliantly and emphasised the lyrics with looks and expressions, which all contributed to make Clare an audience favourite.

LIZZIE PETERS as Cass came over as genuine and honest and gave her character the upbeat and optimistic nature that her role needed to show the camaraderie of the machinists.

GIOVANNI BIANCHI as Eddie O'Grady had obviously been told to make the most of his physique throughout the dance numbers when he frequently flexed the guns, but as the performance continued Giovanni was able to bring more subtlety to the part and show a sensitivity. Through Act Two there was a greater intensity and emotion, particularly through his song *The Letter* as we saw a more soulful side of his character.

MAX MOGG as Harold Wilson had an interesting accent that gave the Prime Minister a definite humour, had great characterisation, and appeared light on his feet during the dance moves. Perhaps understandably, his Prime Minister drew a little more from the buffoon nature of Boris Johnson than the pragmatic and shrewd Harold Wilson, but that only served to bring greater humour to the role.

EVIE GREGORY as Barbara Castle was obviously enjoying herself as I caught her smiling several times at what was happening around her. Evie presented a

good confident stance that brought out the strength, passion and determination of the reforming minister, and reinforced this with a certainty and clarity of speech that did justice to an MP who stood up for women's rights.

BECKY MANN as Lisa Hopkins played her character with the poise and elegance required of the Director's wife. Becky interacted well with Amy as Rita and brought strength to her rebellion as she supported the striking women over her husband.

BELLA FINNIE as Sharon O'Grady played clearly and played with clarity, innocence, warmth, and quiet support as befitted what might be a small stage role but is an important part of the O'Grady family.

BEN FLAHERTY as Graham O'Grady had a great evening, embodying the confident and cheeky child that fitted the part perfectly.

TOBY CAPON as Cortina Man really threw himself into the Cortina song and dance routine, making some great shapes to counterpoint the wonderfully banal song.

SAM FIELD as Tooley came on with a great swagger and a great accent to go with it. His performance in *This is America* was big and brash and everything that it should have been.

OLIVER DAVIS as Monty was an excellent dancer and had great timing. He played the role as affable and sympathetic, but with a vulnerability and earnestness to his part that made the relationship with Connie believable.

EDDIE KNOTT as Mr Hopkins found some good expressive movements to give Hopkins the feel of slightly awkward management not completely at ease with the workers, and an appropriately more refined accent than the local Essex men and women.

ISAAC NASH as Bill had a number of quick-fire comic lines that he delivered clearly and with good timing to make the joke land, and had obviously worked hard with Ned as Sid to synchronise their joint lines.

NED REDFORD as Sid played a solid, down to earth worker, added an entertaining effect of talking from the side of his mouth, and as with Isaac as Bill had their joint timing down pat.

BAXTER EGERTON as Mr Buckton was obviously having fun, perhaps at the expense of some of his teachers, as he embodied the image of an archetypal gowned master, which brought much laughter to the audience.

FLYNN MANSOUR-MOFFATT as Gregory Hubble had a strong and confident delivery that came with just the right degree of nuanced smugness to embody his role as one of the Ford executives.

BEN PEARCE as Barry gave good characterisation of an Everyman among the workers and played well the interaction with the machinists.

JIMI WREN as Ron Macer played it well for laughs to bring out the cheeky nature of his banter and be a foil to the women's attitudes changing around him.

ENSEMBLE

The ensemble was glorious, being a riot of action and enthusiasm right out of the gate with *Busy Woman* proving to be a great start. Everywhere I looked they were smiling, dancing, or interacting quietly without drawing focus. The dances were performed with slick timing, and the cloth throw in *Made in Dagenham* was done very effectively. Movement on and off stage was easy and obviously well rehearsed, and this was particularly present in the last number of Act One *Everybody Out* which proved to be a tunefully riotous end to the first half. This continued lively performance and enthusiasm from the Ensemble demonstrated a successful outcome of what must have been hard work by the creative team and dedication by the students themselves.

CONCLUSION

Apart from needing to temper the band's amplified volume, I would struggle to have any other words of criticism or suggest areas for improvement in this production. Not only did it have great humour, high energy, and huge enthusiasm throughout it was the attention to both big impactful elements such as the demeanour of everyone on stage and small details such as Monty's "Egyptian Walk" pose and a wonky leg on the tea trolley that made this such a success. Debbie Morgan and everyone involved should be very proud of what was Made in Clevedon.