

Theatre Review: Little Shop Of Horrors

There's something strange happening down on Skid Row, complete with singing dentists and murderous plants. [Oscar Bentley](#) heads to The Drama Barn to investigate the latest production of this cult classic musical

Saturday 28 October 2017



Jacob Ashridge as Seymour. Lucy Poulton, Evie Jones and Scarlet Simmons as chorus girls.
Image: Harry Elletson

DramaSoc's production of *Little Shop of Horrors* blew me away. The audience may be sceptical before walking in that such a high concept musical could be pulled off in the intimate space of the Drama Barn, but they would be wrong to doubt the team behind this show. The cast and creatives deliver a magnificent and, given its amateur dramatics context, thoroughly impressive show.

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The musical follows “meek” flower shop worker Seymour Krelborn (Jacob Ashbridge), whose mundane life down on Skid Row after being taken in as an orphan by florist Mr. Mushnik (Harry Elletson) is transformed when he discovers a strange and interesting plant during a total eclipse of the sun. Seymour discovers that the plant, which he names Audrey II, has a taste for human blood, and although it initially flourishes, providing him with fame and fortune, Seymour must struggle to contain the Audrey II, while trying to win the affections of his co-worker Audrey (Anna Hale), who is stuck in a toxic relationship with abusive boyfriend Orin (Joshua Gorroño Chapman).

Arguably, the most impressive part of the production was the stage design. An entire convincing set of Mushnik's Skid Row florists had been built, complete with brickwork on the outside, and demonstrated the true effort that must have gone into this production, with a window in the back of shop revealing the chorus girls at various points used for immense comedy. The Audrey II props themselves were seemingly rented, and while it is understandable that costs and space available in the Drama Barn must have prevented this, it was a little disappointing to not see Audrey II grow again into a monstrosity in the second act as it does in other productions.

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While the entire cast did a good job, with well-maintained accents and decent sounding singing, the clear scene stealer here was Joshua Gorroño Chapman as the abusive Orin, whose electric and jumpy performance was utterly captivating, if his singing was slightly quiet compared to the rest of the cast. The chorus girls of Chiffon (Scarlett Simmons), Lucy Poulton (Crystal), and Ronnette (Evie Jones) are also one of the true genius parts of the musical's script, with the actresses in DramaSoc's production doing these roles justice. Having Harry Elletson as Mushnik remove his hat to reveal a bald patch was also hilarious, and Jacob Ashbridge's singing was a force to be reckoned with. I can't remember whether it's in the original show, but director Joe McNeice's decision to have a Wino (Jack Harberd) appear mid-song from under a pile of coats achieved the biggest laugh of the night.



Joshua Gorroño Chapman as Orin. Image: Harry Elletson

The few flaws came from the Audrey II, as already mentioned slightly disappointing not to see it grow into its full size, and while the puppeteer's work must have been challenging, the movement of the plant in time with the lyrics was all over the place. However, the production managed to overcome the problem that previous Drama Barn musicals have had where the singing is hard to hear due to the music overpowering it.

Ultimately the cast and creatives proved equal to the challenges presented by this challenging show, and was certainly one of the best and most professional efforts staged in the Drama Barn I have seen.

8/10

Little Shop of Horrors continues to run in the Drama Barn until the 29th of October. Tickets available on the door.



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