

## Nomads show the best of boho

**Nomads: Showtime Bohème, at New Greenham Arts, from Thursday, March 16, to Saturday, March 18**

What is it, I wonder, that makes Newbury's Nomads able to attract – and keep – so many young talented people when other societies struggle to do so? Time and again in their performances, it is the sight of the stage full of enthusiastic, committed performers doing what they love best which makes the evenings a success, even though not everything may be perfect.

And although not everything was absolutely perfect in **Showtime Bohème**, the society's spring concert designed to give as many members as possible a chance to be on stage, nevertheless the audience's enjoyment was evident.

The storyline that wandered through the show and began, I thought, with a rather-too-long dialogue before the opening number, was that of a society seeking a sponsor to put on a showcase at their local hall. There was romance, too, mainly between Charlie (a brilliant performance from George Stacey) and Fran (Melissa Hughes wryly, emotively singing *The History of Wrong Guys*), plus abandoned fiancée Alison Hoult as Jo, wistfully recalling 'good old Beverley Hills'.

Beth Marsh, as Sally, choreographer to a gloriously uncooperative group of dancers, gave expressive feisty charm to her singing of *Practically Perfect* and ended up with the right guy (Samuel Briggs as the lively Jamie). He joined with Shaun Blake as Dan in one of the funniest duets, desperately hurling themselves around in Sondheim's *Agony*.

Almost pipping George Stacey to Number One Show Stealer was Andy Spaak as *The Invisible Writer*, using his rich voice to great effect and giving pathos to *Mr Cellophane* from Chicago.

Among other good performances were Freddie Cook, obviously enjoying himself as Mark (good voice), the excellent actress Grace Ryder as Patty, Hannah Maskell as sparky Liz, and Jon Lovell and Nikki Harrison as romantic 'back-up' Sam and Helen.

Particularly impressive was the lively, cohesive singing and co-ordinated movement when the whole cast were on stage. Led by musical director Jevan Johnson Booth, the combination of 'the band' and these singers was always dynamic and effective.

Perhaps Nomads' secret for keeping their members is that they mix the unusual with the well-known as they have done with their song choice in **Bohème**. Whatever it is, it works and director Harriet Wilson can be satisfied with the outcome.

CAROLINE FRANKLIN