

Revue is alive and well

NEWBURY NOMADS' SPRING CONCERT, at Shaw-cum-Donnington village hall on Sunday, April 8

Stephen Sondheim celebrated his 70th birthday last year. It is interesting to speculate whether the course of the modern musical would have been different had George Gershwin not died at the age of 38, shortly after writing his masterpiece 'Porgy and Bess'. These two giants of 20th century American musical theatre were celebrated in Newbury Nomads' latest Spring concert which, despite the limitations of the stage and minimal lighting, proved to be an entertaining evening.

Singing show songs out of context is never easy but producer Mandy Maskell carefully matched the chosen material with the performers at her disposal. The Sondheim selections were largely confined to the familiar, such as 'Send in the Clowns' and 'Losing my Mind' - ample evidence that, contrary to popular misconception, he could indeed write a good tune.

Jeanette Maskell made the most of the clever lyrics in 'I never do anything twice' and simple but effective choreography enhanced 'You could drive a person crazy', written as a trio but sung here, appropriately, by almost the full 'company'.

Of the Gershwin songs, Delia Canning made the strongest impression in her two numbers, the bitter-sweet 'But not for me' and the delightful 'I'm a poached egg'.

The other unfamiliar song was 'That new-fangled mother of mine' presented by Beverley Witts with an amusing mimed contribution from Dee Cummmigs.

Master of ceremonies Daniel Maskell produced humorous links and brief biographical details. Piano accompaniment was in the capable hands of Jevan Johnson who showed her versatility by singing the beautiful 'Summertime'. Thanks to the Nomads, it is pleasing to report that the art of Revue (as well as Review) is not dead.

TREVOR DEFFERD