

**Review: Mamma Mia!**

**By Su Carroll**

***Mamma Mia!*, Theatre Royal Plymouth**

What a joyous way to kick-start the year at the Theatre Royal Plymouth with a hugely uplifting, glorious musical.

There is no escaping the fact – as we arrive fully masked – that the past two years have been a tumultuous period for theatres. TRP has been closed, opened with restrictions and now has non-socially distanced audiences with masks. It's been a tough time for theatres, performers and audiences.

But this, ladies and gentlemen, is what it feels like to be back. *Mamma Mia!* is the biggest welcome home party of all times. Packed with all the massive hits guaranteed to fill any dance floor and with a sun-soaked setting that has everyone dreaming of beaches, sand and warm weather.

I want to begin at the beginning because every visit to the theatre wants to be a theatrical experience. It's about more than what happens after the curtain goes up. Front of house staff are always friendly when you arrive, but it took a few minutes to realise that they were all in summer clothes – Hawaiian shirts, colourful shorts, and pretty floral dresses. It created an instantly happy vibe.

*Mamma Mia!* Is the ultimate crowd-pleaser. Firstly there is the great back catalogue of Abba hits from the moving *I Had a Dream* (which opens and closes the show) to the frenetic energy of *Voulez Vous*, the saucy *Does Your Mother Know*, the comedic charm of *Take A Chance on Me* and all the emotional power of *The Winner Takes It All*.

Then there is the choreography – all sharp and energetic thanks to the presence of a feisty ensemble. And then, the icing on the cake, the performances. This is a show with women at the centre – Donna (Sara Poyzer) a single mum running a little Greek hotel and preparing for the wedding of her daughter, Sophie (Lucy May Barker) to Sky (Toby Miles). Joining them for the celebrations are Donna's old backing group the *Dynamos* – Rosie (Nicky Swift) and Tanya (Helen Anker). The only one missing is Sophie's dad. But who is he? Donna's old diary narrows it down to three – her first love Sam (Richard Standing), posh boy Harry (Daniel Crowder) and wanderer Bill (Phil Corbitt) and Sophie has invited them all.

Obviously (this is based on Abba songs after all) there will be a happy ending with lots of singing and dancing. Full credit to the audience for not joining in during the show but as soon as our cue came we leapt to our feet as one to wave our arms, sing along, laugh and smile before heading out into the night with a spring in our step. Dancing Queens every one.