

FAME - The Musical

'I'm gonna live forever ... baby, remember my name!'

Robert Fyfe discusses the production by the Apollo Players at the King's Theatre in Glasgow, a show which they have presented successfully four times.

Introduction Apollo Players and FAME

The Apollo Players, one of the UK's most prolific and energetic amateur theatre companies, have presented *Fame - The Musical* on no less than four occasions. The Club initially presented the show in 1998 at the 1,500 capacity King's Theatre in Glasgow and were amazed when the relatively low cost show became a complete sell-out; so much so that they decided to repeat the show the following year with similar results, but this time with David de Silva, who conceived and developed *Fame - The Musical*, flying over from New York to see the show! Two years later the Club, in collaboration with the King's Theatre, ran a summer workshop for young people, the culmination of which was a junior production of *Fame* in a smaller local venue. The results were the same – sell out shows and standing ovations! This year, as part of their 40th anniversary celebrations, the Apollo Players returned to the King's Theatre with a brand new production of this youthful, vibrant musical – and the audiences still flocked in and packed out the beautiful Edwardian Frank Matcham theatre, in which they are extremely fortunate to be able to perform.

BACKGROUND

Fame - The Musical is nothing short of a global phenomenon, appearing to have almost universal appeal. Many remember the film version and the popular, long-running television series and want to come out of a sense of nostalgia, but others too young to remember these are still attracted by the music, the fabulous dance routines and the characters who, unlike many characters in musicals, seem to have something relevant to say about the issues facing many young people today. It is also a relatively inexpensive show to produce.

THE PLOT

Set during the last years of New York City's celebrated High School for the Performing Arts on 46th Street (1980-1984), *Fame - The Musical* is the bittersweet but ultimately inspiring story of a diverse group of students as they commit to four years of gruelling artistic and academic work. With candour, humour and insight, the show explores the issues that confront many young people today: issues of prejudice, identity, self-worth, literacy, sexuality, substance abuse and perseverance. A word of caution – one of the songs '*Can't Keep It Down*' has very suggestive lyrics and may not be suitable for productions involving children in the cast or in the audience. The rights holders however supply alternative lyrics for junior productions. Apollo received no complaints and the number, if staged well, can provide a good comedic opportunity.

CASTING

The Apollo Players have a policy of open auditions, recognising that not everyone is suited to every type of show. All existing Club members, including those who have played principal roles, are required to re-audition, and only those best suited to the type of production get in. Certainly this is important for a dance show such as *Fame*. It is acknowledged that this might be easier for a big city Club like Apollo to do, with a huge catchment area (most of Scotland's population living in the surrounding central belt), as well as the attraction of appearing on stage at the prestigious King's Theatre.

All auditionees are expected to *perform* a song, with piano accompaniment, not just sing it, as for performing in a musical play and not a concert. This takes place before a panel of Club Directors, the Musical Director and in front of a group of fellow auditionees. This has been found to be of help in making everyone aware of the standard required. Rather than Apollo suffering as a result of

