



Café Culture in Bruton

Students at Sexey's School in Bruton are very lucky. Lucky to have the creativity and vibrancy of their Head of Drama, Wendy Kiddell. I have enjoyed previous performances under her guidance, from King Lear to Little Shop of Horrors. The school's most recent production, Charlie Cool's was written by Wendy herself with clever and interwoven original music composed by Head of Music, Bill Badley.

"I wanted to create something fresh and original and that was for us. The students feel a real ownership, especially as nearly all of the parts are for their actual age," Wendy explained.

Drama is a great deliverable for students. Rather than a great leveller, it is a superb enhancer that gives that sense of self belief and individual ownership from day one, something that all the cast grasped with adept confidence. What student could not be excited and inspired by creative and slightly zany choreography routines reminiscent in places of Greased Lightnin'?

Charlie Cool's is a café in the centre of a small town, somewhere in Britain during the 1950s, where you can enjoy a milkshake and a laugh away from nagging parents and the pressures of school. It's where friends chat,

hearts break and the elusive love of your life is an ever-changing, eternal possibility. The set fused this with a charming blend of American diner and roadside Little Chef, with little style echoes throughout of Grease, Happy Days or Back to the Future.

Grace Martin excelled as the café owner Charlie; petite, wiry and a constant world-weary irascibility born of her young clientele and desire for a smooth-running business. Her early announcement of a forthcoming prize talent show is a catalyst for some of the most basic human emotions and behaviour – rivalry, jealousy, angst and skulduggery.

Elijah Taylor played Dave, the archetypal 'too cool for school' quiffed and aspiring bully, if not quite a rebel then certainly lacking in maturity and morals. Elijah was convincing and magnetised our eyes, as he drew in accomplices for his scheming to involve talented singer Fred in an effort to win the cash prize.

Naturally there is a network of teenage who-fancies-who to unpick. An early ballad from Sue (Rose Beedle) 'You Don't Even Know' reveals her desire for Fred (Adam Wagstaff), who meanwhile in turn has plans for Helena (Audrey Greensmith) who quite misguidedly is in a relationship with Dave.

Rose's voice was exquisite, bringing a flavour of Olivia Newton-John and an ideal early musical scene setter. Audrey shone throughout, both vocally and acting, providing a good dynamic with Adam's Fred who really convinced as a nice guy but not at all dim as he came to realise he was being used. A beautifully simple and short song 'Too Late to Say I'm Sorry' delivered movingly by Audrey was the perfect pause before the wrap up scene.

Wendy's writing gave some good quips throughout and kept a good pace to the narrative. There was plenty of room for supporting roles to shine. Spencer Law was a great pivot as Phil in the café scenes, working well with Harrison Davis who brought fun and good timing to the role of Bonzo. My heart was also singing as the whole cast brought the show to a close with 'Is This a Game' – the whole cast exuding that confidence and just downright fun and appreciation of a stage.

Wendy's script really should be on the market for other schools to utilise.

This autumn's open evening for Lower School at Sexey's is Thursday 19th September from 6pm. Sixth Form open evening will take place on Wednesday 13th November. See www.sexey.somerset.sch.uk