Pride and Prejudice like never before...

In a coup for amateur dramatics, Ruislip Operatic Society is the first to stage Pride and Prejudice: The Musical, penned by an Emmy winner. ALAN HAYES wonders whether Jane Austen's classic romance can ever, really, be sung

R

USLIP Operatic Society hooked some big fish with the world premiere of Pride and Prejudice: The Musical, and its impressive cast of American actors. Did the show live up to its prestigious billing? Just about.

Darcy, Elizabeth, Mr. Darcy, and Mr. Darcy, among others, were well received by the audience, and the overall production was very well received. The cast worked hard and the music was top-notch.

Could the cast pull off an early 19th century English society, with its repressed emotions and strict manners, while delivering a show that is both exciting and humorous? RODSView, a challenge, and as a company with a great deal of success, it was always going to be a success.

Darcy (Matthew Bailey) was a strong lead role, and he carried the weight of the show with ease. He was well-versed in the role and brought it to life with great energy.

The plot, based on Austen's 1813 romantic novel, follows the Bennet family and their long-suffering mother. Mother wants them all married and happy, but Darcy intercepts her plans.

In the end, the show was a huge success, and the audience was left wanting more. The cast and crew should be commended for their hard work.

Profile

An American in Ruislip for a world premiere

EMMY award winner Rita Abrams, one half of the writing team behind Pride and Prejudice: The Musical, could not be happier that Britain – and Ruislip Operatic Society in particular – got to stage her Austen musical first.

She does, however, admit she had to look Ruislip up on a map from her home in Mill Valley, northern California, when her agent called to tell her that a director in the UK had come a-knocking.

“It did seem that being the UK it was very synchonistic to have the premiere here,” she said. “To have the world premiere here is very exciting.

“Our agent (shared with co-author Josie Brown, below) approached us very initially when (director) Heike Bailey called us, and we left it very much in our hands.”

Ruislip Operatic Society veteran director Bailey had been looking forlornly for a winter show after her first choice had been scrapped.

Mass emails, frantic calls and some last-minute reworking later, the deal was done and “P&P” was on its way across the Atlantic.

“We had to get all the materials prepared very quickly and get them to us,” said Abrams, a former primary school teacher whose life took a completely new direction when a song she wrote for her class back in 1989, in the town in which she still lives, was picked up by a Warner Bros music producer.

It became a hit.

Forty-three years of musical theatre, children's music, and film and TV soundtracks later, she said she was “reading Pride and Prejudice for the umpteenth time” (when I was struck that the story really should be a musical”.

Up stepped Josie Brown, a neishar neighbour from the San Francisco bay area, whose husband had collaborated with the show.