

**Baz Luhrmann's Strictly Ballroom The Musical**  
**The Court Theatre**  
**23 November 2024 – 1 February 2025**

Colourful cozzies, sequins in all directions, brash characterisation, awesome dance sequences and a happy ending; nothing could be more appropriate for the last hurrah for The Court Theatre's thirteen year sojourn in the Addington Shed.

The opening night audience lapped it up appreciatively and a standing ovation erupted spontaneously all over the theatre. The tradition of The Court Theatre's superb summer musicals has been followed successfully and, as always, it will pay to book tickets rapidly to ensure a seat.

The set, hung round with sequin embossed scallops of curtaining, allowed the flexibility needed for a variety of locations, from the dance studio, competition venues, streetscapes, back gardens and room for the large-scale dance routines demanded by the story. Clever use was made of video sequences adding to the backstory of the action. The piece de resistance was projection onto a sheet hanging on the Hill's hoist in the Hasting family's back yard.

Action backstage must have been frenetic as the ensemble changed costumes, pivoting from the great ballroom sequences to presenting the variety of characters peopling the stage. Costuming was ballroom at its most garish and one can sense the delight of the wardrobe, hairstyling and makeup teams as they created a visual symphony on the stage. Special mention here must go to the gloriously peacock jackets of J.J. Silvers.

A special word must go to the seamless scene changers, dancers in white tie who theatrically swept onto the set, removing and replacing set elements. Also of note were the lightbulb moments; monologues and solos highlighted by hand-held frames to amplify the background to the action.

Rania Potaka-Osborne is powerful in the role of Scott, the boundary pushing dancer at the centre of the story. He looks fantastic and dances superbly. Strategic use of black, white and gold in his costuming means he dominates each scene he appears in. A sense of arrogance is inherent in his character and vacillation between his ambition as a dancer and his relationship with love interest Fran is the focus of the story. It is in his relationship with his father that Potaka-Osborne most clearly reveals Scott's vulnerability.

Lucy Sutcliffe as Fran lets us read her emotions at every stage of the story, her relationships with the key characters are obvious and carry the weight of the storytelling. Her transformation from disregarded duckling to blossoming swan was achieved faultlessly. I suspect Scott does not deserve her.

Court Theatre regular Roy Snow was clearly enjoying his role as the chairman of the Dance Federation, Barry Fife. He created the wonderfully stereotypical power-hungry bully the audience loved to hate. Backing him up in the bullying stakes was Jessie Lawrence as Shirley Hastings, the hero's uber pushy mother.

Huge kudos must go to Jonathan Martin as Shirley's henpecked husband, Doug. He garnered sympathy from his wife's first putdown, and the audiences delight in his reestablishment.

The plot may be predictable, as love triumphs over the odds and the baddies are done down, but The Court Theatre company have taken Baz Luhrmann's well-known tale and have thrown everything at it. The story is a send up of the eighties ballroom dance scene and follows the great Aussie tradition of parody. Paraphrasing the immortal words of The Castle - this production should go straight to the pool room.