Show Report

Acton AOS

The Witches of Eastwick

17 October 2026

Acton AOS
The Witches of Eastwick

SHOW REPORT

– 2026-27 Season –

Northern Stage Awards

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PRODUCTION INFORMATION

PRODUCTION	The Witches of Eastwick
SOCIETY	Acton AOS
VENUE	Lyceum Theatre Crewe
GENRE	Musical
CAST SIZE	33
DIRECTOR	James Freeman
CHOREOGRAPHER	Emily Wycherley
MUSICAL DIRECTOR	Treona Holden
PRODUCTION MANAGER	Carl Knapper
STAGE MANAGER	Del Bromley
LIGHTING DESIGNER	Sarah Knapper
SOUND DESIGNER	Tom Maurice
SOUND OPERATOR	AJ Thompson
FOLLOWSPOT OPERATORS	Billy Knapper & Nathaniel Owen
STAGE CREW	Rachel Willis, Heidi Bradney, Paul Whitehead, Sean Clark-Wilkinson, Steve Barber, Paul Whitehead and Lyceum Staff
SCENERY	AMT Productions
PROPS	Bev Morris & Ruth Gater
WARDROBE	Jo Stubbs & Rene Hancock
DRESSERS	Jo Stubbs, Tracey Jones, Nicola Wycherley & Jo Morris-Davies
PROGRAMME	Emily Wycherley
PHOTOGRAPHY	Lauren Jones at LJ Photography
PRINTING	Solo Press
SOCIAL MEDIA	Eleanor Morris & Emily Wycherley
FRONT OF HOUSE TEAM	Ian Hall, Jenny Hall, Nancy Bradney, Rene Hancock, Rob Earl, Heather Clark-Wilkinson, Mary Bolide & Cory Levick-Jones

THE BAND

KEYS 1	Jeremy Bailey
KEYS 2	Andy Savva
REED 1	Natasha Mallon
REED 2	Anna Lamplough
REED 3	Kim Jameson
TRUMPET 1	Carl Gratty
TRUMPET 2	Nathan Goldstraw

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HORN	Bill Moss
TROMBONE 1	Claire Dixon
TROMBONE 2	Gareth Mead
LEAD GUITAR	Dave Francis
BASS/GUITAR	Dave Lily
PERCUSSION	Ben Riddle
CELLO	Abi Davis-Jones

CAST LIST

Darryl Van Horne	Sam Dale
Alexandra Spofford	Gemma O'Donnell
Jane Smart	Debbie Cornock
Sukie Rougemont	Jennie Dale
Felicia Gabriel	Sophie Congleton
Clyde Gabriel	Levi Rhodes-McKenzie
Jennifer Gabriel	Eleanor Morris
Michael Spofford	Owen Whitehead
Little Girl	Holly Tweedie
Fidel	Simon Dean
Ed	Kevin Whitfield
Brenda	Laura Morris
Gina	Andrea Lyon
Greta	Rachel Hadzik
Joe	Dom Roberts
Marge	Karen Flannery
Raymond	Adam Simpson

ENSEMBLE

	Amelia Pearse
	Angela Barlow
	Cara Manfredi
	Dean Cornock
	Ellie Morris-Davies
	Georgia Garner
	Justine Twiss

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Katie Garnett
Lauren Jones
Marco Criscuolo
Mark Freeman
Melody Freeman
Rachel Rodgers
Ruth Talbot
Ruth Vidler
Shannon Vernon

DATE OF PERFORMANCE	Saturday 17th October 2026
DATE REPORT PUBLISHED	Monday 19th October 2026
ADJUDICATOR ID	NSA0001

NSA LOGO ON POSTER	Yes
NSA IN PROGRAMME	Logo Only, No Banner
PROGRAMME CLASS	Not Applicable

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THE REVIEW

REVIEW WORD COUNT	1944
STRONGEST ELEMENTS	**Characterisation** • Confident, engaging performances from the principal cast, with excellent comic timing, expressive mannerisms and strong chemistry between the three witches. **Technical Execution** • Well-coordinated lighting, clear sound and spectacular flying effects combined to create memorable theatrical moments and seamless transitions. **An Energetic Ensemble** • A committed, well-rehearsed company delivered lively musical numbers with strong energy, strong engagement and effective use of the stage.

It was a pleasure to return to the Lyceum Theatre for Acton AOS' production of The Witches of Eastwick, a musical filled with mischief, magic, comedy and plenty of opportunities for theatrical spectacle. Having been crowned winners of Musical of the Year in the previous season, the society certainly had expectations to fulfil, and I was particularly interested to see how the society would follow such a successful production last season of Oliver. I am delighted to report that they once again demonstrated their commitment to delivering entertaining, polished and thoroughly enjoyable musical theatre.

From the outset, it was evident that considerable thought had gone into the presentation of this production. The stage was well crafted, featuring versatile scenery that allowed the action to move smoothly between locations. Rather than relying on an abundance of elaborate set pieces, the society adopted a relatively stripped-back approach, with a limited, repetitive number of scenic elements and properties being moved at any one time. This proved particularly effective, maintaining the pace of the production and avoiding unnecessary interruptions to the storytelling.

The use of the theatre's flying gallery was particularly noteworthy, with scenery and gauze cloths incorporated effectively to assist with scene changes and transitions. These elements added another dimension to the staging and helped create a sense of fluidity throughout the performance. I also particularly enjoyed the large painting of Darryl positioned upstage centre during Act Two, a striking visual addition that complemented the character's larger-than-life personality.

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Costuming was equally successful, with a varied selection of outfits that reflected the individuality of the characters. Although there was no particularly obvious overarching costume theme, the garments were appropriately suited to the period and setting, well fitted and effective in establishing the personalities of those wearing them.

From a technical perspective, the production was particularly well supported. Lighting coverage was consistent, with effective washes and well-executed transitions that helped establish atmosphere and distinguish between scenes. The use of follow spots was also effective and well operated, drawing attention to principal performers when required. There were perhaps a couple of occasions where a little additional haze would have helped accentuate the gobo effects and create greater depth within the lighting design. Nevertheless, the overall lighting was thoughtfully programmed and operated, contributing significantly to the ambience of the production.

Sound quality was very strong throughout, with strong clarity and a well-balanced mix that ensured dialogue and musical numbers could be heard comfortably. Sound cues were delivered reliably and on time, while the thunder and lightning effects were particularly impressive, synchronising accurately on every occasion. These details are easily overlooked when executed correctly, but they are fundamental to creating a convincing theatrical experience.

Of course, one of the production's most anticipated technical moments came at the conclusion of Act One, when the witches took to the air. I am reliably informed that this was the first time ACTON AOS had incorporated performers flying into one of their productions, and what an achievement it was! The sequence was executed safely and confidently, with the inclusion of low smoke which helped to enhance the atmosphere. It was an ambitious undertaking that certainly paid off and provided a memorable conclusion to the first half.

Choreography throughout was effective and accessible, accommodating the varying abilities of the company without appearing unnecessarily complicated. Although the movement was not particularly adventurous, it suited the production and was delivered with confidence. The emphasis on clean execution, strong positioning and ensemble coordination ensured that the musical numbers remained visually engaging.

Turning to the performances, **Sam Dale** took on the formidable role of Darryl Van Horne, delivering a wonderfully camp, entertaining and commanding portrayal. Sam demonstrated excellent characterisation, with carefully considered mannerisms and strong comic timing that made his performance consistently engaging. He was a methodical and reliable performer who clearly understood the character's dominance and theatricality. Whenever Darryl appeared, Sam confidently owned the stage, maintaining the audience's attention through his expressive delivery and assured stage presence. His performance was suitably mischievous, flamboyant and thoroughly entertaining.

The three central witches formed an excellent partnership, with a natural chemistry that allowed their contrasting personalities to complement one another beautifully.

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Gemma O'Donnell, portraying Alexandra Spofford, delivered a relatable and engaging performance, supported by strong vocals and confident characterisation. Her contribution to Make Him Mine was particularly impressive, with the number showcasing not only her individual vocal ability but also the excellent harmonies achieved between the three leading ladies. Gemma brought warmth and authenticity to Alexandra, helping establish a character with whom the audience could readily connect.

As Jane Smart, **Debbie Cornock** demonstrated excellent comic timing and a particularly strong understanding of vocal expression. Her pitch, tone and inflection during dialogue were consistently well judged, while her accent was maintained convincingly throughout. Debbie also displayed excellent breath control and vocal ability, delivering her musical contributions with confidence. She deserves particular recognition for her work during the flying sequence, where she appeared remarkably comfortable in the air. Her movements were precise and controlled, with the same attention to characterisation and mannerisms that she demonstrated while firmly on the ground. This was a confident and accomplished performance.

Completing the trio was **Jennie Dale** as Sukie Rougemont, who brought a wonderfully natural quality to her portrayal. Sukie's initially timid and somewhat subdued personality was communicated effectively through Jennie's posture, facial expressions and carefully considered delivery. Her characterisation embraced the stereotypical qualities of the role without becoming exaggerated or unconvincing. Jennie demonstrated good diction, strong breath control and a natural stage presence, contributing significantly to the chemistry between the three witches.

Together, Gemma, Debbie and Jennie worked exceptionally well. Their contrasting personalities were clearly established, their vocal harmonies were strong, and their shared scenes demonstrated the importance of a well-rehearsed and cohesive principal partnership.

Sophie Congleton was a formidable Felicia Gabriel, delivering a fierce, confident and powerful portrayal. Her strong stage presence and expressive mannerisms perfectly captured Felicia's controlling personality. Sophie committed wholeheartedly to the role, ensuring that Felicia remained a memorable and imposing presence throughout the production. Alongside her, **Levi Rhodes-McKenzie** brought plenty of humour to Clyde Gabriel. His characterisation was entertaining, particularly through his distinctive shuffling movements around the stage. Levi remained focused and engaged, making good use of physical comedy to communicate Clyde's personality and relationship with those around him.

Eleanor Morris, portraying Jennifer Gabriel, brought a gentle, submissive and elegant quality to her character. Her controlled performance and considered mannerisms suited the role well, providing an effective contrast to the more forceful personalities surrounding her.

As Michael Spofford, **Owen Whitehead** demonstrated confidence and poise, remaining focused and engaged throughout his appearances. He performed outwardly towards the audience, ensuring that his character's intentions and reactions were clearly communicated.

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A special mention must go to **Holly Tweedie** as the Little Girl, who opened the production with a delightful and confident performance. Holly sang with assurance, immediately establishing the atmosphere of the show. Her posture, movement and characterisation throughout the production were particularly impressive, capturing a convincing childlike innocence and youthful energy. She remained fully in character, providing an elegant and engaging opening to the evening.

And now, as a certain character might say, "RIGHT THEN!" **Simon Dean** as Fidel was an absolute delight. Despite having a virtually non-speaking role, apart from those two memorable words, Simon created one of the production's most entertaining characters. His physical characterisation was excellent, with expressive mannerisms, carefully considered posture and wonderfully judged comic timing. Even when met with enthusiastic screams and reactions from the audience during his scenes, Simon remained completely focused and committed to the performance. He commanded the stage without relying on dialogue, demonstrating just how effective physical acting can be when executed with precision. A wonderfully funny and memorable contribution.

Among the supporting company, **Dom Roberts** particularly impressed as Joe, demonstrating excellent reactive acting and facial expressions during the musical numbers. His commitment, energy and movement were consistently strong, and he brought a genuine likeability to the character. It was refreshing to see such attention paid to reactions and engagement, even when the principal focus of a scene was elsewhere.

Laura Morris also made an entertaining contribution as Brenda, embracing the character's exaggerated reactions with enthusiasm. Her eye rolls, head movements and expressive delivery were particularly effective, demonstrating a clear understanding of the comedic style required. Her dialogue was confidently delivered, adding further humour to the scenes in which she appeared.

The remaining supporting characters, including **Kevin Whitfield** as Ed, **Andrea Lyon** as Gina, **Rachel Hadzik** as Greta, **Karen Flannery** as Marge and **Adam Simpson** as Raymond, contributed to the wonderfully stereotypical collection of nosy neighbours and townspeople. Their collective engagement helped establish the small-town atmosphere of Eastwick, with strong reactions and interactions that supported the principal performers and added depth to the storytelling.

The ensemble as a whole deserves considerable praise. They were energetic, focused and consistently engaged, delivering their musical numbers with strength and enthusiasm. Their commitment was particularly evident in the larger company sequences, where the stage felt suitably busy without becoming chaotic.

Two numbers stood out as personal favourites: Dirty Laundry and Dance with the Devil. Both were performed with confidence and tremendous energy, demonstrating the company's rehearsal and preparation. The effective use of the available stage space created visually exciting sequences, with plenty happening across the stage while retaining a clear sense of

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organisation. These were thoroughly entertaining moments that captured the spirit of the musical.

Another scene worthy of recognition was the production's more intimate and suggestive sequence, which was directed with excellent comedic judgement. The combination of carefully choreographed lighting, physical humour and innuendo ensured that the scene achieved its intended comic effect without becoming unnecessarily crude or smutty. The timing and execution were well controlled, resulting in considerable laughter and applause from the audience. This was a particularly good example of understanding the balance between adult humour and effective theatrical comedy.

Ultimately, what impressed me most about this production was the consistency of its delivery. From the confident principal performances and committed supporting company to the reliable technical execution and effective staging, there was a clear sense of preparation and teamwork throughout.

Acton AOS have once again demonstrated why they are a society capable of producing such enjoyable musical theatre. Following their previous Musical of the Year success, expectations were understandably high, but this production certainly showed that their commitment to quality, entertainment and attention to detail remains firmly in place.

If I were to summarise this production in four words, they would be professional, rehearsed, fun and entertaining. There was a real sense of value for money, with plenty of laughter, strong performances and memorable theatrical moments for audiences to enjoy.

I would have liked the opportunity to have been hosted by a member of the society so I could have the opportunity to ask questions about the cast, creative team, volunteers backstage and about rehearsals and the society itself, for me - I love to learn and write and report about things the audience do not always see, so please consider this at a future production.

However, a huge congratulations to everyone involved, both on stage and behind the scenes, for another successful and thoroughly enjoyable production. Acton AOS should be incredibly proud of what they have achieved with The Witches of Eastwick, and I look forward to seeing what theatrical magic they conjure up next!

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PHOTOGRAPHS



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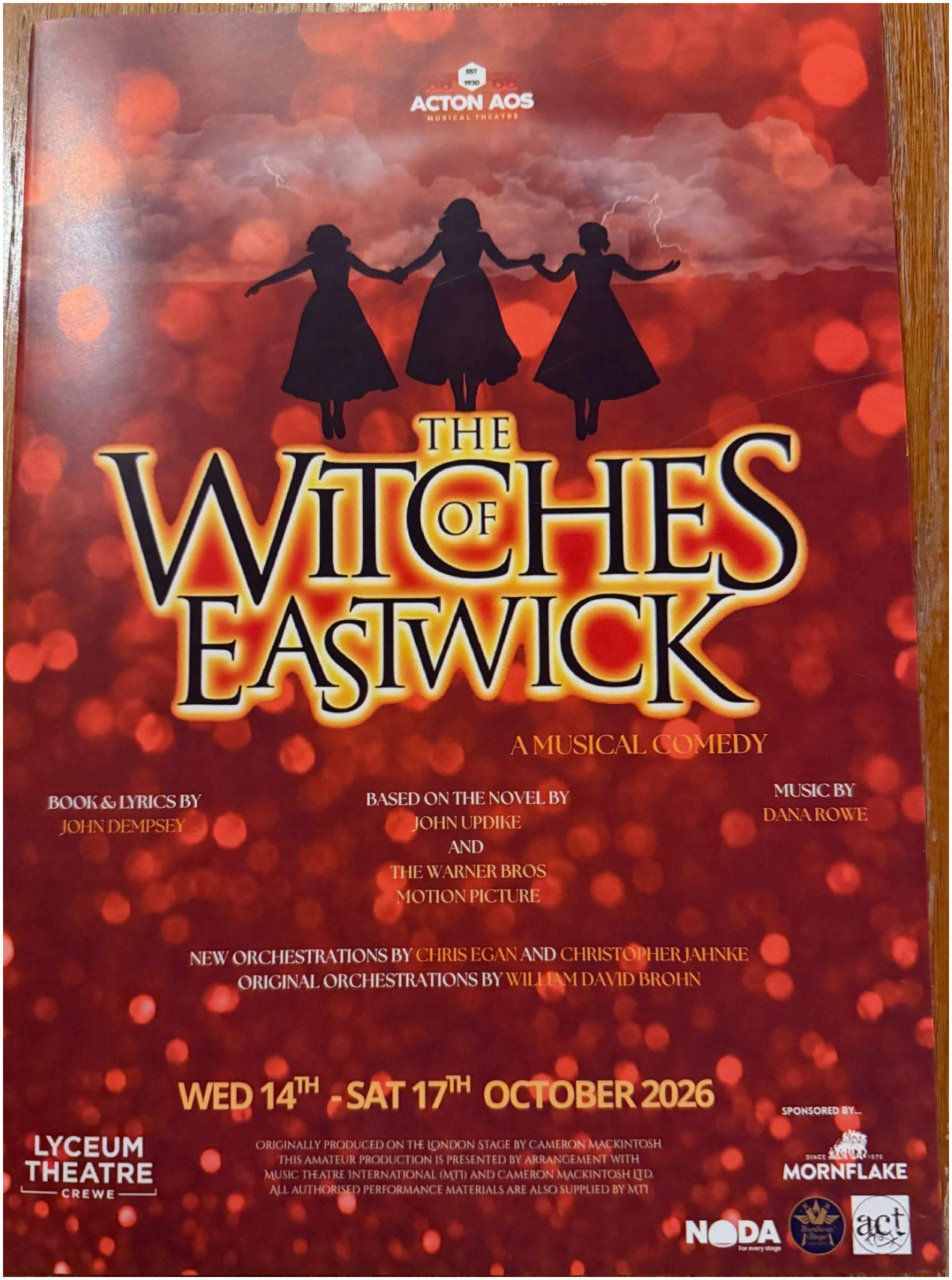
PROGRAMME



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