



Show Report

Sparks Dramatic Society

Sparks On The Menu

4 July 2026

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

PRODUCTION	Sparks On The Menu
SOCIETY	Sparks Dramatic Society
VENUE	Hyde Festival Theatre
GENRE	Revue
CAST SIZE	37
DIRECTOR	Daniel Oliver-Grant
ASSISTED BY	Sue Bradbury & Tom Dodd
CHOREOGRAPHER	Sue Bradbury
ASSISTED BY	Erin Bradbury & Hollie Knowles
MUSICAL DIRECTORS	Daniel Oliver-Grant & Kat Rawling
STAGE MANAGER	Martin Webber
TECHNICAL	Ste Oliver-Grant, Kelly Holder & James Bradbury
COSTUMES	SDS & The Cast
PROPS	SDS, Jem Pattison & Jem Marshall-Ayre
CHAPERONES	Jayne Webber, Jo Buckley, Karen Matthews & Lee Mottershead
PROGRAMME DESIGN	Dave Ayre
FRONT OF HOUSE	Hyde Festival Theatre Volunteers

CAST LIST

Adam Carter
Alana McCarthy
Amanda Todd
Archie Dunne
Aria Jordan
Aubrey Mottershead
Ava Horrocks
Beth Sharp
Caitlin McCarthy
Charlie Edger
Charlotte Lee
Daniel Oliver-Grant
Darcie B
Debbie Thomason
Eirin Waddington
Ellie Hulston
Emily Dunne
Emily Pattison
Erin Bradbury

Freya Swire
Georgia Ricketts
Grason Firth
Hollie Knowles
Kat Rawling
Lily Wood
Maisie Lomas
Melissa Mottershead
Millie Holder
Millie Weston
Molly Dunne
Nancie Powell
Phoebe Cope
Poppie Phillips
Rachael Coogan
Sue Bradbury
Tom Dodd
Tommy Sheedy

DATE OF PERFORMANCE	Saturday 4th July 2026
DATE REPORT PUBLISHED	Monday 6th July 2026
ADJUDICATOR ID	NSA1003
NSA LOGO ON POSTER	Yes
NSA IN PROGRAMME	Yes
PROGRAMME CLASS	Best Original Design

THE REVIEW

REVIEW WORD COUNT

1907

STRONGEST ELEMENTS

Powerful Performances

Adam Carter displayed a wide range of musical characters with clear differences between each one, including in *'We Both Reached For The Gun'*, which combined strong vocals with great physicality to convincingly portray the puppet-like movement required within that song.

Inclusive casting

A varied programme successfully showcased performers of all ages, providing meaningful opportunities for everyone to contribute whilst creating a strong sense of community on stage.

Striking and Cohesive Design Choices

Effective use of lighting, including haze, LED tube lighting and carefully chosen colour palettes, created an attractive concert-style aesthetic that complemented the wide variety of musical numbers without distracting from the performers.

Returning to watch another production by Sparks Dramatic Society, I was looking forward to seeing their musical revue, Sparks on the Menu. Set within a café, the production offered an evening of musical theatre favourites, along with crowd pleasers that reflected the current musical theatre zeitgeist.

As I entered the venue, I was warmly welcomed by my host **Ste Oliver-Grant**. He explained that while there wasn't an overarching storyline, the cafe setting provided a simple framework for the cast that allowed each number to be enjoyed as an individual showcase.

One of the first things I noticed during the opening number, **'Mamma Mia'** was the strong sense of community within the company. It was clear that there was a wide variety of performers, from the 'Little Stars' at just 3 and 4 years old to more experienced performers supporting them. It was lovely to see this progress throughout the evening as the older members supported the younger ones in each of their performances.

The setting came to life during the appropriately chosen song **'Opening Up'** from Waitress, and it was a nice touch that the cast set the cafe setting themselves during the song. The setting was used in a variety of ways and provided a simple yet effective backdrop without distracting from the performances themselves.

At the heart of the cafe setting, **Tom Dodd** acted as a staff member, linking the various performances together while remaining constantly on stage throughout the entire production. What particularly impressed me was Tom's reactive acting. Even when he wasn't directly involved in a number, he remained fully committed to the character he had created, helping maintain the café atmosphere throughout. It was a subtle detail that added greatly to the overall production. Tom's confident stage presence continued during his solos, including **'Money Money'** from Cabaret and **'One Night In Bangkok'** from Chess. The spoken, rap style elements of these songs suited his voice well and allowed Tom to show his personality.

Tom also later featured with **Erin Bradbury** in **'Therapy'** from Tick Tick Boom! I liked how they used background acting to set the scene of a couple who were arguing in the cafe during the number before this, as it allowed a smooth transition from one song to the next. The pair's acting remained throughout this number, with good commitment to the humorous tone. Vocally however, the challenges of this particular piece did affect their pitch and intonation, and more focus on this would've strengthened the performance further. The foundations of both Tom's and Erin's performances were still strong despite this, as they both shone in different areas of the production.

The Little Stars opened with **'Wake Up Shake Up'** and later returned with **'Come Follow The Band'** from Barnum. The fact that it was their stage debut, made their confidence in these numbers very impressive. Their enthusiasm and smiley faces were adorable, and it was lovely to see the support they received by both the audience and their fellow cast members, particularly **Tom Dodd, Erin Bradbury** and **Millie Holder**, who supported them on stage.

'School Song' from Matilda provided an enjoyable company number, with members of the Big Stars group, all presenting as school children with some nice solo singing parts and good characterisation. One young performer who particularly stood out in this number and throughout the production was **Georgia Ricketts** who performed with confidence well beyond her years, displaying good stage presence and clear knowledge of the lyrics and choreography. The ensemble of teens and adults in this number also portrayed strong diction, as it is quite the wordy song but you could hear every word nonetheless.

The senior group, supported by some adults, came to the stage with **'Kids Game'** from Blood Brothers and **'Food Glorious Food'** from Oliver!. **'Kids Game'** was a highly energetic number in which each performer displayed good acting through song. **Ava Horrocks**, who is new to the stage caught my attention as she fully committed to the character and accent in this number and her enjoyment was evident throughout her performance. Vocally, there were moments where tone became a little uncertain, but the enthusiasm of the cast ensured the number remained entertaining.

One of the first choreography highlights of the night came with **Adam Carter**'s rendition of **'Pinball Wizard'** from The Who's Tommy. The choreography was energetic and engaging with strong synchronisation, making good use of stage space as Adam stood on top of the cafe counter, not to be lost within the number of people on stage.

Throughout the production, choreography by **Sue Bradbury** displayed a range of dance styles, including contemporary, tap and hip-hop. Whilst the choreography was appropriate for the wide age range of performers and delivered with commitment and good synchronisation, I occasionally found some movement patterns between numbers with similar styles to be repetitive, and introducing greater variation between routines could help give each musical number a stronger individual identity. Sue should nevertheless be congratulated for balancing the role of choreographer whilst also performing within the production herself. Amongst the adult and senior dancers, **Amanda Todd**, **Caitlin McCarthy** and **Erin Bradbury** particularly stood out to me, as they performed the wide range of dance styles with confidence and strong stage presence. Amanda also delivered a range of solo singing moments with clear diction and good clarity.

'Omigod You Guys' from Legally Blonde proved to be one of the stronger performances within the first act. The harmonies within this number were impressive, as the adult female ensemble supported **Ellie Hulston** to create a balanced and confident sound. Members of the adult group also performed **'A Step Too Far'** from Aida, **'Steppin' To The Bad Side'** from Dreamgirls and concluded act one with **'Get Ready/Dancing in the Street'** from Motown Musicals, which was vocally led by Director and Co-Musical Director **Daniel Oliver-Grant**. This number provided a lively and upbeat finish before the interval, leaving audiences excited to see what act two had to offer.

Adam Carter had quite a few solo performance opportunities throughout the production, but the one that stood out to me the most was **'We Both Reached For The Gun'** from Chicago. The vocals throughout this song were well controlled with good timing, volume and use of character voice and accent. His use of physicality within this number however was what impressed me, as Adam fully committed to the concept of being puppet-like as though manipulated by invisible strings, allowing his body to move with convincing precision.

Big Stars **Aubrey Mottershead** and **Georgia Ricketts** returned to the stage with a K-pop Demon Hunters duet, **'What It Sounds Like'**. Both performers delivered the number with good stage presence and commitment and with more experience, these two young performers are definitely ones to watch in future productions.

The senior group, again supported by some adult performers, continued the momentum with **'Hard Knock Life'** from Annie and **'Bad Guys'** from Bugsy Malone. Both numbers were performed with good energy, and it was encouraging to see the performers fully embracing the character of each piece. Good facial expressions and commitment also helped bring the songs to life.

Eirin Waddington and **Grason Firth** both stood out to me during these numbers, as Eirin had strong vocal protection and timing and Grason, in his stage debut, showed confident stage presence and humorous use of mime in his exit.

One of the standout performances of the evening for me came during **'El Tango de Roxanne'** from Moulin Rouge!. Vocalists Daniel and Adam, the senior and adult dancers and the use of effective lighting worked cohesively to deliver a compelling performance, combining strong vocals with impressive movement and emotional storytelling. The tango-style choreography within this number was particularly effective, capturing the drama and intensity of the piece whilst remaining clean and well executed throughout.

Co-Musical Director **Kat Rawling** performed a solid vocal performance of **'In My Dreams'** from Anastasia. Her warm, princess-like vocal tone and controlled delivery created a sincere and moving performance, whilst the choreography complemented the song well without becoming distracting. Although featured less frequently as a soloist, she made every moment count.

Act Two also featured several strong duets. **Hollie Knowles** and **Charlotte Lee** delivered confident vocals and pleasing harmonies in **'Apex Predator'** from Mean Girls. Although intermittent microphone issues meant parts of the performance were unfortunately lost, this did not take away from the overall performance as they continued the duet with confidence. **'As Long As You're Mine'** showcased a lovely vocal blend between **Daniel Oliver-Grant** and **Beth Sharp**. Beth had already caught my attention earlier in the evening, and this duet highlighted the warmth and versatility of her voice. Whilst I personally felt Daniel's standout performance came later in **El Tango de Roxanne**, he provided strong support throughout. **For Good**, performed by **Melissa Mottershead** and **Ellie Hulston**, provided a fittingly gentle contrast, with both performers delivering sincere vocals supported by effective pink and green lighting, a nice nod to the classic musical colours.

'Hit The Road Jack' from Ray, The Musical brought some enjoyable dance moments, with adult dancers who have different levels of experience, showcasing tap choreography that was inclusive for all involved. **'Fame (I Wanna Live Forever)'** was the penultimate number, and it brought the show to a nice conclusion with both the older and younger dance groups able to shine in their moment of choreography. **Rachel Coogan's** vocals in this number were strong, with powerful projection and plenty of confidence as she stood up on the table tops of the set. At times, greater control over the vocal riffs would have added even further polish to this number, but overall it was still a solid performance.

Throughout the production, the technical team: **Ste Oliver-Grant**, **Kelly Holder** and **James Bradbury** supported the production well. I did feel that the sound could have improved in balance at times, as to not lose the vocals under the volume of the backing tracks. Lighting however, including the use of haze, spotlights and impressive LED tube lighting created an attractive concert-style aesthetic, whilst colourful lighting washes complemented the wide variety of musical styles presented. I particularly liked how the choice of lighting colours

presented as a nod to each musical's colour palette, such as the blue lighting in the Dear Even Hansen song '**Sincerely, me**'.

The interactions taking place around the café tables and surrounding set were a lovely way of maintaining the overall theme of the production, with performers remaining engaged even when they weren't the focus of attention. These small moments helped create a believable atmosphere and tied the musical numbers together nicely. Placing even greater emphasis on these interactions, or introducing a few more linking moments between songs, would strengthen the overall flow of the revue even further, whilst still allowing each performance to stand confidently on its own. The concept itself was an interesting twist on a traditional revue, and with these additional moments to reinforce it, I feel it would create an even stronger sense of cohesion across the production.

Overall, **Sparks on the Menu** celebrated the enthusiasm and dedication of a company clearly passionate about musical theatre. The production provided performers of all ages with valuable opportunities to develop and showcase their talents, whilst creating an enjoyable evening of entertainment for the audience.

Thank you to everyone involved and to the volunteers of Hyde Festival Theatre for your warm welcome, and I look forward to seeing what the society brings to the stage next!

PHOTOGRAPHS







PROGRAMME

Sparks
Dramatic Society

HYDE
Festival
THEATRE

SPARKS
on the Menu

A MENU PACKED WITH
MUSICAL MAGIC

**SOUVENIR
PROGRAMME**

Saturday **4th July 2026**
Show starts at **7:15pm**

HYDE FESTIVAL THEATRE
Corporation Street | Hyde | SK14 1AB

Sparks

NORTHERN
STAGE
AWARDS

NODA
For every stage