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## Report on “9 to 5: THE MUSICAL” by Grayshott Stagers

<b>Group:</b>	Grayshott Stagers
<b>Production:</b>	9 to 5: The Musical. Music & Lyrics by Dolly Parton; Book by Patricia Resnick
<b>Director:</b>	Laura Musco
<b>Date:</b>	Thursday 23 May 2024
<b>Venue:</b>	Grayshott Village Hall

### Description of the Production:

*9 to 5: The Musical* has a long history. It was first performed as a musical in Los Angeles in 2008 and opened on Broadway in 2009 but it's based on the 1980 film of the same name. With music and lyrics by Dolly Parton, it could hardly fail and it has understandably won many prestigious awards.

It revolves around the lives of several women working in the typing pool of a small industrial company, Consolidated Industries, at the end of the 1970s, under the creepy and lecherous President Franklin Hart Jr, who it turns out is also a petty crook, embezzling the company's funds. The three main female characters are Violet, a widow and long-standing Supervisor hoping for promotion; Doralee, Mr Hart's secretary who resists his unwelcome overtures; and Judy, the newcomer who admits to having absolutely no office experience whatsoever but needs the job having recently been divorced. Then there is Roz, who secretly lusts after Hart and enjoys telling tales about what the rest of the staff are up to in order to curry favour.

Violet is passed over for promotion in favour of someone she trained, Doralee discovers that Hart has been spreading rumours that they are having an affair, and Judy is struggling with a lack of self-confidence as she battles with typewriting and a Xerox machine with a mind of its own. The three women go back to Violet's house where they share a joint, supplied by her teenage son, and then act out their fantasy of how they would get rid of Hart.

Returning to the office, Violet accidentally poisons Hart's coffee but Roz has overheard them and tells Hart who pretends he was actually poisoned and threatens them with the police. Doralee, infuriated, ties up Hart with the telephone wires and the three women decide to imprison him in his own house (his trophy wife having conveniently gone off on a month's cruise). He is tied to his bed and the women then work out how they can explain his absence to the rest of the staff, while taking on the running of the company themselves, making it more productive and successful and a happier place to work. Judy arranges to send Roz away on a language course by forging a memo from Hart (thanks to Doralee's forgery skills), which makes Roz think he doesn't like her.

Hart escapes his captivity, takes Judy hostage, and returns to the office – in his pyjamas. In the meantime the women have discovered that he was embezzling company funds and plan to expose him but they seem to have been thwarted. Along comes Mr Tinsworthy, CEO of Consolidated. He congratulates Hart on the changes made while the women try to tell him that it is actually they who have made the difference. In order to reward Hart for his success, Tinsworthy sends him to manage the South American branch in Bolivia where he is captured by natives and never heard of again! The three women realise their potential: Violet is

promoted to Company President and finds a new love, Doralee becomes a successful country and western singer, Judy remains single and writes a bestselling book, and Roz discovers her true love in the person of Hart's wife. And they all lived happily ever after – I always like a happy ending!

### **Front of House and Theatre Ambience:**

Very friendly and enthusiastic Front of House team. Grayshott Village Hall is solidly built with good facilities, opened in 1902. It has a good sized stage although apparently there is not much space behind the scenes. A very useful smaller side hall served as the bar.

### **The Programme:**

Excellent A5 programme, cleverly designed to look like an office handbook. Instead of biogs, the cast and crew notes were imaginatively described as Personnel Files with interesting little thumbnail sketches of each with their photos, many of whom have been involved with Grayshott Stagers for a long time but equally a large number of newcomers. I loved the notes with a guide to the 1979 office – something I remember very well and which evoked many happy memories of my career in offices in the 1960s and 1970s – and beyond!

### **Scenery/Set/Props:**

The set was simple and easily moved around by cast and crew who were very efficient and slick. Old fashioned typewriters, telephones and a magnificent xerox machine gave an authentic feel to the office scene. Three large 'box' flats on castors came and went, doubling up as office selves, the Ladies' room, Hart's bedroom.

### **Lighting:**

Lighting was discreet and effective.

### **Costumes:**

The 1970s costumes were authentic and together with a mixture of wigs gave a real sense of the period. There were a number of very quick changes which were impressive. Well done Chris Brennan, Pauline Dowsett and their team who would have had their work cut out with such a large cast.

### **The Production:**

The production opened with an image of Dolly Parton herself projected above the stage, introducing the play. The bustle of a busy office was a fitting start and the cast kept up the pace throughout the production. The three main contenders, Violet (Susie Gow), Doralee (Lizzie Hales) and Judy (Clemency Bray) all had strong singing voices. I found Clemency's voice particularly pleasing. They made a very strong trio and worked well together. But there wasn't a weak link. The obnoxious Franklin Hart (Nigel Dams), star struck but thwarted Roz (Rachel Perkins), pathetic ex husband of Judy (Joe White), saviour of the day Russell Tinsworthy (Martin Sims) - it's difficult to single out anyone in particular. The casting was impeccable.

Congratulations to Director Laura Musco who re-lived something of her own experiences in a 1970s office. Interestingly, Laura tells us that instead of a live band the music was the official set of instrumental tracks provided by the licensors so the audience had the benefit of a full orchestra. This in itself must have been a challenge to the cast to get their timings

absolutely right, otherwise the music would have carried on and left them floundering! Well done Rob Miller, the Musical Director, for keeping everyone up to the mark.

As usual, a thoroughly enjoyable evening, full of nostalgia for those 'good old days' when technology was but a dream and the biggest headaches were changing the typewriter ribbon and fighting with a photocopier with a mind of its own.

Jane Turner  
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