

## Everybody "Cut Loose" for Fantastic Footloose

What next for Our Lady's musicals following the incredible high standard of their recent production of "Footloose"? With a huge cast this year (180 plus), the show was amazing from start to finish with high energy, great colour, brilliant dancing and superb acting.

The story is based around Ren (Colm Gleeson) and his mother Ethel (Ruth Johnston) who move from Chicago to the small, sleepy town of Bomont. It's not long before the rebellious, dance-loving Ren finds himself at odds with the town's strict and conservative pastor - Rev. Shaw Moore (Beni Varadi). The two powerful opening numbers "Footloose" and "On Any Sunday" beautifully captured++ the contrasting worlds of these two central characters.

Rev. Moore's daughter was played by Julie Grey who put in a wonderful performance as the smart, sweet Ariel with a "bad girl" edge. This role involved strong acting, singing and dancing and Julie ticked all the boxes in her first lead role. Eoin Boyle was super as Chuck (local bad boy, Ariel's girlfriend) A convincing "baddie", he brought the stage to life in his number "The Girl Gets Around", ably assisted by his two sidekicks Lyle (Declan Nolan) and Travis (Joss Devine).

Romantic sparks soon ignite between new kid Ren and the rebellious Ariel. The warmth, tenderness and humour of their relationship was beautifully portrayed by Colm and Julie. Their acting was so natural, dance moves always in sync and their singing beautiful especially in their touching duet "Almost Paradise".

Colm Gleeson is no stranger to the stage and his experience and versatility was easy to see. His confident stage presence made his character both endearing and entertaining. A great mover, Colm impressed with his superb vocals and wonderful acting - in particular in the numbers "I'm Free" and of course "I Can't Stand Still". His energy and flexibility were amazing, and he looked like he was loving every minute on stage.

Ariel's friends Rusty, Urleen and Wendy Jo were played respectively by Mai Marnell, Isabelle Adlum and Amy O'Brien. This trio created some great moments of humour and girly fun. Mai Marnell was sweet and engaging as the scatterbrain Rusty. The dynamic between herself and onstage partner Willard was warm and entertaining. Mai's sweet voice and endearing presence made her number "Let's Hear it for the Boy" a great hit with audiences. Hats off to the female chorus (literaly!!) also for this energetic number.

Isabelle (who played Urleen) and Amy (Wendy Jo), both beautiful singers, also showed their dancing and acting ability in their roles. They were super at all times especially in "Somebody's Eyes" and in the memorable show-stopper "Holding Out for a Hero". Julie Grey's performance in this number was top class.

Two stunning performances which also stood out were those of Beni Varadi (Rev. Moore) and his onstage wife Vi played by Laurie Mullen. One of the younger performers on stage, Laurie's portrayal of the loving, quiet but strong Vi was so mature and heartfelt. You could hear a pin drop during her rendition of "Can you find it in Your Heart?" and "Learning to be Silent". Hopefully we will be seeing more of Laurie and hearing more of her incredible voice in the future.

Ruth Johnston (as Ren's mother Ethel) is a performer with great stage presence. She played the adult role compassionately and confidently and the mother-son dynamic between herself and Colm was so realistic. Her beautiful singing voice along with Laurie and Julie in "Learning to be Silent" certainly struck a chord with many.

Beni Varadi is another experienced singer and actor who brought his best to this show. His stunning voice was well showcased in the number "Heaven Help Me" which he delivered with sensitivity and maturity. His powerful portrayal of Rev. Shaw Moore captured the character's inner struggles so well. A fine performance in every way - the maturity in Beni's acting and singing certainly belies his age. The scenes between himself and Vi were beautifully directed and performed.

Newcomer to the stage Kevin Bourke was quite a revelation as the warm hearted, simple country bumkin Willard. A great mover and singer, Kevin threw himself into this comic role and put in a super performance. Along with Ren, Bickle (Stephen Tuohy), Lyle (Adam Dryer), he brought the house down with his hilarious number "Mama Says". Brilliantly choreographed, this number was certainly a favourite with all age groups.

Ely Carroll was great as Cowboy Bob - he led the chorus in dancing and singing in the number "Still Rocking". There were convincing performances all 'round in all other speaking parts... (Adam Tynan O'Connor, Finan McAleese, Emily Ahern O'Connell, Eimear Hennesy, Emily Murray, Lucy Barton and Marco Perez Aleman).

Footloose is a real dance show and the chorus certainly impressed with their elaborate dance moves and strong singing. Huge credit must go to Ms Therese Maher (director and choreographer) yet again for an amazing job! Musical director Mary Rose McNally as always got the best out of the principals and the chorus and this was evident in the wonderful, confident singing throughout.

As we've come to expect from Our Lady's shows, the sets and scene changes were excellent. Set design / Construction / Art; Finn O'Hara and Ronan Kinane. Stage management; Norma Galvin, Ronan Kinane. Costumes were striking and spot on (Aileen Cashman and Avril Kinnerk). Well done to the music department Anne Marie Johnston, Eimear O'Callaghan for doing a great job on overall co-ordination. A special word of

congrats to Anne Marie not only for being the person who every year "makes it all happen" but for the incredible standard to which it happens.

The M. C's at every performance promised us a "foot-stomping", "heart-pounding" experience and the cast and crew of Footloose certainly didn't disappoint! Bravo to all involved!

### Photographs and Captions



Colm Gleeson as Ren, Ruth Johnston as Ethel, Beni Varadi as Rev. Shaw Moore and Laurie Mullen as Vi.



Julie Grey as Ariel with her friends Wendy Jo played by Amy O'Brien, Urleen played by Isabelle Adlum and Rusty played by Mai Marnell.



*Julie Grey as Ariel, Beni Varadi as Rev. Shaw Moore and Laurie Mullen as Vi.*



Adam Dryer as Lyle, Stephen Touhy as Bickle, Colm Gleeson as Ren, Kevin Bourke as Willard and Joss Devine as Travis.