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Hairspray is undoubtedly one of the best modern musicals for amateur performance though it is a big challenge for any society to take on particularly in such a small venue as The Brook in Soham.

Director Dan Schumann tackled this large-scale production expertly - he and Choreographer Jess Clifford moved the huge cast with energy and precision. In fact Jess' choreography was superb and an utter joy to watch.

The songs and, in fact all the music, were excellent thanks to Musical Director Richard Hayward and helping make it all move along was the absolutely first-rate orchestra.

Staging was good and scene changes were slick with cast members deftly adding their help. The lighting too was good, only once did we have a dark patch upstage on Penny and Seaweed. Good use of radio mics, although I did have trouble hearing Edna. The 1960's costumes were excellent and much attention to detail had been paid to the make-up and hairstyles of everyone on stage. Congratulations to all concerned in those departments.

A very strong cast supported by a talented Ensemble of singers and dancers was a winning combination to say the least.

The enviable role of Tracy Turnblad was in the capable hands of Zara Minns, whose portrayal of the plus-sized teenager from Baltimore was outstanding. Zara demonstrated her talents in all aspects of Musical Theatre, bringing out the character of this dizzy teenager. Rarely off the stage, she gave an exhaustive performance in this role, her singing and dancing were spot on as she led the Company in many musical numbers including 'Good Morning Baltimore' and the ever popular finale *You Can't Stop The Beat*.

Many laughs were provided by Tracy's parents, the always impressive Joseph Beach as Wilbur and Jake Overy as Edna. These two characters gave us a great duet with *You're Timeless To Me*. Their relationship was believable and "Timeless to Me" was very amusing - hard to remember that Edna was a man!

Amy Roberts and Riley Williams as Mother and daughter Velma and Amber Von Tussle were impressive and made a very effective duo.

Penny Pingleton was played by Macey Bennett who brought the required amount of naivety and innocence in her portrayal. Her religious Mother was played by Vicky Fordham, a great part to play. *Mama, I'm a Big Girl* with the three mums and daughters was great.

Excellent performances from the versatile Dan Lane as TV host Corny Collins (Friday night), Joe Griffiths-Brown who shone as Seaweed and Tracy's love interest heart throb and hero Link

Larkin played by Olly Manly, who in a first-rate performance showed he can act as well as sing and dance.

The young group of black friends meeting at Maybelle's Record Shop were a lively bunch, under the wing of Jamie Musora as Motormouth Maybelle. Jamie's jazz voice was impressive.

All smaller and cameo roles were individually entertaining, especially Little Inez (Elisha Cardwell), Mr Pinky (Zak Potts) and Matron (Vicki Jellyman) to name but three.

Hairspray is the ultimate feel-good musical. It deals with some serious issues (body image and racial segregation) but in a fun way. Viva should be proud to add *Hairspray* to their list of successes. It fizzed from start to finish was full of great comedy, vocals and slick choreography and was simply a great way to spend a hugely enjoyable evening. One that will, I'm sure, be remembered for a long time

Bravo Viva!