

# Cry-Baby the Musical: Squeaky Clean

[THE DIALOGUE THEATRE BLOG](#) AUGUST 13, 2017

Exploding onto the stage in a flurry of cable knit sweaters, rockabilly dress, and vocal talent, Whitley Annual Residential Theatre Society's (WARTS) production of *Cry-Baby the Musical* proved to be a fittingly jubilant and rabbleroxing finale to the organised stage presence of Whitley College. Delivering a surplus of laughter, love, and catchy tunes, *Cry-Baby* both impressed and entertained.

From the moment the curtains were drawn, the talent and technical experience of the executive team and crew for *Cry Baby* were apparent. Katrina Bell's complex choreography coupled with effective lighting, set, and costume design ensured that the musical's opening number: "The Anti-Polio Picnic" injected the production with an energy and professionalism that made you feel decidedly good about your decision to come on a cold Thursday night.

Helen He and Andrew Hey's direction, guided a wealth of expressive and vocal talent in all the right ways to create a cohesion and chemistry among the cast that succeeded in forming a convincing drape/square divide (the two conflict groups of the story), and lent a real level of polish to expression and vocal performances despite a few fleeting moments of disharmony in the first act. Importantly, humour never failed to hit the mark, with appropriate line deliveries and stage movement eliciting laughter and smiles throughout the duration of the production.

Costumes, by Caitlin Ridell and Alice Rowe, and set design, by Leonie Leonida and Sam Moerkerk, were excellent. Although minimal, set elements and props provided just the right amount of atmosphere for actors to have unchallenged movement around the stage and space for the often table-top situated dance moves and actions. Costuming was simple and effective, marking clear divides between drapes and squares, and staying true to *Cry-Baby's* 1950s Baltimore style.

Ben Goss as Cry-Baby and Sherry Watson as Allison Vernon-Williams both proved to be strong leads, faithfully and convincingly playing their respective roles with strong line delivery, dance, movement, and equally extraordinary singing ability. Supported by incredibly impressive dance, vocals, and diction from the entirety of the cast, Goss and Watson powerfully represented the love-struck antics of the teen duo. Lydia Bell as Lenora Frigid also has to be mentioned. Her supporting role proved to be one of the most humorous elements of the production, and was empowered by her striking expressive and vocal abilities.

The production was, on the whole, spoilt in terms of vocal talent with a few members of the cast exhibiting notably amazing singing abilities. Billy Stafford as Dupree, Bronte Gosper as Mrs. Vernon Williams, James Lugton as Baldwin Blandish, and Bell as Lenora all delivered fantastically at every opportunity. Stafford as Dupree was outstanding, particularly in the solo, “Jukebox Jamboree”, and his duet with Ben Goss, “A Little Upset”.

The culmination of this production’s successful elements was truly consolidated in the musical’s finale, “Nothing Bad’s Ever Gonna Happen Again”. Bringing the whole cast together in a roaring display of vocal and choreographic talent, the number effectively drove home the positive sentiment of its repeating title, provoking a well-deserved wave of applause.

WARTS’ production of *Cry-Baby the Musical* impressively concluded the on-stage presence of Whitley College and resolutely solidified the notable and enduring vocal, expressive, and technical capabilities of all who were involved.

## **Flynn Pervan**

*Whitley College’s production of Cry-Baby the Musical ran from the 10th – 12th of August in the Union Theatre.*