

By Andy Potter

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There's a certain kind of magic sprinkled over the Alfreton Grange Arts College this week, and the wizards are the Ripley and Alfreton Musical Theatre Company. A quarter of a century ago who would have guessed that a musical co-written by the guys from Abba and Tim Rice about possibly the world's oldest board game would be one of the top ten shows of all time.

If you doubt the impact of Chess get yourself a ticket for this production as it is quite simply stunning. From the expert orchestrations, imaginative choreography and neck hair tingling inspired solo and choral work, this has to be the best musical I have seen this year. Under the directorship of Phil Simcox, I would like to mention everyone connected with the show, but extra praise should be paid to Andy Quinn as Frederick, Jonathan Penton as Anatoly, Paul Whitworth as Alexander and especially Hilary Lean as Florence.

Pitch perfect, totally believable and giving emotion that you can feel as well as see, Chess is the culmination of many months of work that proves the adage that you reap what you sow.

Sometimes being a critic means you are out watching shows when, if I'm honest, it would be good to have a night in. Chess throws all of that out of the window, even with some minor technical glitches, it's a production that you should get out to see this week and give the Alfreton and Ripley Musical Theatre Company the standing ovation that they so clearly deserve.

Checkmate.