

Times OUT



BOXING LEGEND: Clockwise from left: Freddie Mills overcame all odds to become World Light Heavyweight Champion in 1948; Paul Standell played Mills in *Seconds Out!* by Terry Williams; Mill's sweetheart, Nicola Foxfield, was played by Christine Broadribb.

What's on

Broadway Theatre, Catford
020 8690 0002
broadwaytheatre.org.uk
Of Mice and Men
Until October 24
£6-£13.50
Show me Chris & Pui
October 24
£10-£12

Bob Hope Theatre, Eltham
020 8850 3702
Hot Mikado
Until October 23
£12.50
Tickets: rlos.co.uk or 07732 923 341

The Churchill, Bromley
0844 8717 620
ambassadorickets.com/bromley
Annie
Until October 23
£22-£26
The Firework Maker's Daughter
October 26-30
£19
Julian Clary
October 31
£23.75
The History of the Big Bands
November 1
£19-£21
An Audience with Jimmy Greaves
November 2
£19.50- £21.50

Fairfield Halls/Ashcroft Theatre
020 8688 9291
fairfield.co.uk
BBC Concert Orchestra
October 23
£10-£29.50
Glenn Miller Tribute Concert
October 23
£17.50
Disney's Beauty and the Beast
October 27-30
£13.50-£15

Greenwich Playhouse
020 8858 9256
galleontheatre.co.uk
When No One is Watching
Until October 31
£12

Greenwich Theatre
020 8858 7755
greenwichtheatre.org.uk
Rum and Coca Cola
Until October 23, £12.50-£17.50

Brave musical proves itself no lightweight

THE Edward Alderton Theatre is never afraid of taking risks and on the whole *Seconds Out!*, written and directed by Terry Williams, is one that has been worth taking, writes Steve Spencer.

The musical performed at the Bexleyheath venue centres on the life of champion boxer, Freddie Mills, between 1939 and 1948.

Born the son of a rag-and-bone man, he starts working life as a milk boy before joining the fairground in Ma Basham's boxing booth.

After enlisting he becomes an RAF hero balancing fights in the ring with air raids over Germany. After 'demob' he returns to boxing to become Light Heavyweight Champion of the World.

There is plenty to enjoy in this pared-back production: catchy tunes, well-crafted lyrics and a plausible story depicting Freddie's highs and lows.

Casting a musical brings its own challenges but Terry Williams successfully knocked his lead roles into shape.

There were a few throaty performances on the evening I attended but nonetheless everyone sang with enthusiasm.

Paul Standell as Mills pulls off the necessary swagger to convey at the same time a down-to-earth honesty and vulnerability, meaning each fight is won on merit rather than deviousness.

Favours (Michael Martin) is an admirable foil who brings a comic chirpiness to the drama and delivers the best songs, *Call up Papers* and *Rotten and Evil*, with total clarity.

Nicola Foxfield (Christine Broadribb), Freddie's girlfriend and daughter of his manager, is well-cast and sings *Damn the Man* and *Freddie* with passion and credibility.

Brian John (Ted Broadribb) and Ma Basham (Claire Kingshott) are equally well played. Ma Basham's solo, *Another Great War* was particularly moving, a song questioning the futility of it all.



The minor roles are played well too, many doubling or even tripling up.

Having said that some songs seemed a little too long and a snip here or there would not go amiss. The movement on stage seemed clumsy at times: Favours' nifty footwork tended to show up the slightly awkward steps of others.

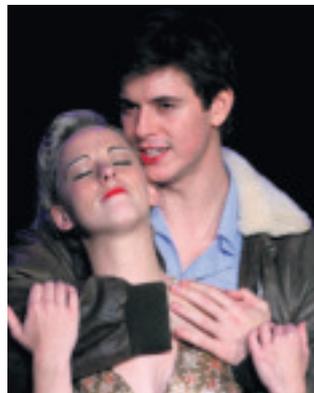
However, music co-arranger, Ed Hooson, tucked in the corner of the stage on the piano deserves special mention: he played with verve and sensitivity, always keeping performers within his sights.

The integration of radio broadcasts

and projection of contemporary stills of blitzed London, 1940s interiors and the Café de Paris all added to this innovative choice of production.

Having recently won three awards from Bexley Council Arts Panel, the rest of the season should be something to look forward to.

● *Seconds Out!* runs at the Edward Alderton Theatre, Bexleyheath, until this Saturday, October 23. The next production at the Edward Alderton Theatre will be *Absurd Person Singular* running December 4 - 11. Tickets: 020 8301 5584.



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