

Miss Saigon gives audience roller coaster of emotions

Review by JO HILLS

THE superlatives came as plentifully as the resounding applause as the curtain went down on *Miss Saigon* last night.

It's brilliant, terrific, superb, echoed around the TSB Showplace.

Yet this is not the sort of show you leave the theatre singing the songs or even remembering the tunes. Many commented that the music wasn't at all familiar. However, it is a show that totally captivates you with its drama, power and emotion. It is very memorable.

Even the favourite star of the show was hard to determine. Probably because this production is a real team effort. As the lead characters took their final bow, each was received with enthusiastic approval by the very satisfied audience.

They had witnessed the roller coaster ride of emotions that Melissa Nordhaus poignantly presented as Kim. They enjoyed the character of the Engineer that Mark Louthard brilliantly brought to life. They held their breath in anticipation as Dean Mullin made life changing choices as the story unfolded and felt the pain and struggle Idelle Hiestand conveyed as his American wife.

They cheered Anthony Joines on as the good guy back in the States trying to help the children left behind in Vietnam by their American fathers. They shuddered as Benjamin Moody (They) sought revenge. They appreciated every move of Gigi (Emily Julian) and the Dreamland girls. And Tam, the child, melted their hearts with his pure cuteness.

But there was also so much more the audience had been impressed by in this production that is another of director



Ousted orchestra: With too many musicians to fit in the orchestra pit, the live music for the *Miss Saigon* production at TSB Showplace in New Plymouth comes from the Alexandra Room, a space removed both physically

and visually from the stage. Conductor Don Boyd is able to make sure the music and singers keep up with the action by watching the musical on a screen in front of him.

Photo: CHRIS HILLCOCK

Warren Bates' success stories.

There was the unseen orchestra who were such a large group with so much equipment that they were not in their usual spot in the orchestra pit, but out of sight in the Alexandra Room. The same could be said of the booth singers who provided the supportive backing.

Don Boyd, the musical director, received the accolades they so richly deserved when he came on stage for the curtain call.

The technicalities of staging this

show were immense. It involves more than 200 people, but the New Plymouth Operatic Society rose to the challenge and exceeded all expectations.

With authentic costuming, large screen photos, dynamic lighting including an amazing US flag and the arrival of a helicopter on stage, this production has that wow factor.

Those who have seen it will be buzzing. Don't miss your opportunity. *Miss Saigon* continues to play until Saturday, October 24.