GYMFUSION: What will your dream be?

at The Lowry Theatre , Salford
Reviewed by Matthew Dougall Feb 2017

British Gymnastics showcase young gymnastic talent from all over the UK each year with their famous and fabulous **Gymfusion** shows. The first of this year's shows was today at Salford's **L owry Theatre**
, and this year's theme was 'dreams'.

The event was a little long, but was made longer by a lot of unnecessary banter and almost pantomimic routines from the two comperes, **Frankie May** and Olympic Gymnast **Danusha Francis** . If we had had a proper programme, rather than a single A5 leaflet which doubled as a flier for the

event, then there would have been no need for comperes at all. Maybe it was just me, but this style of banter (and the glow sticks) brought the tone of the event down to an 'It's A Knockout' or Butlin's level, which I feel the competitors and ethos of the show is far beyond.

However, one thing I do wholeheartedly applaud, was the decision to allow the audience to film and photograph the acts live [with the aim of the photograph being tweeted live to promote the show and British Gymnastics in general]. In a paranoid world full of litigious scaremongering and over-protective child protection policies, I found this both refreshing and healthy.

In total there were 17 items on the programme, and the gymnastic clubs which were represented here came from up and down the country, with one exception; Dynamite Gymnastic Club came from the land of my birth, Scotland, and had two groups performing in this showcase.

Majority of the groups were youths, with the youngest performer being only one and a half years old! Some groups had adults in too, and the abilities and technicalities of each group varied quite a lot. It has often been said, however, that gymnastics is a natural extension of dance and dance theatre, and that was made abundantly apparent in today's display. Highly theatrical, and fusing dance and choreography with gymnastics was most definitely the order of the day.

Not being a gymnast myself I found it very difficult to understand the different disciplines and technical aspects of the performances; however I did marvel at the flexibility, timing, fitness,

balance and presentation skills. I am from a theatre background, a Musical Theatre background to be more precise, and so the items on show this morning which pleased me the most were those which showed a greater degree of theatricality, storytelling, and stage presence; and of course using songs from Musicals to dance or gymnast to is always a good start!

I am not going to mention all 17; I'd be here all day. What is noteworthy though is that some of the clubs represented here were performing for the first time outside their area or indeed some gymnasts were taking their first leap in front of an audience! All were of a high standard and well executed, and the whole event highly commendable in both aim and product. I shall therefore simply mention my personal favourites. The **Dynamite Rockets**' '*Where's Wally?*'; **Shooting Stars** ' '*Welcome To New York*'; but my overall favourite of the entire event was without question The **Dynamite Ignition**'s '*Andrews' Sisters*' routine.

More Dancefusion events are scheduled for theatres around the UK over the coming months, and details of these and all things related to British Gymnastics in general can be found by going to www.british-gymnastics.org