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West End Eurovision 2019 – Adelphi Theatre

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The cast of *The Phantom of the Opera* perform at West End Eurovision. *Picture: Gaz Sherwood PBG studios.com*

West End Eurovision 2019 at the Adelphi Theatre, London.

This year **West End Eurovision** saw seven West End shows compete (using original songs from the *Eurovision Song Contest*), while entertaining a lively audience and panel of celebrity judges.

It was pretty impressive that the acts were able to stun the audience – from the side-splitting (***Only Fools and Horses The Musical***) to the soul-stirring (***The Phantom of the Opera***) – on top of continuing their typical seven-shows-a-week schedule.

With audience votes equating to £1 donations, the focal point of the night was to raise funds for the Make a Difference Trust, to support HIV and AIDS projects in the UK and Sub-Saharan Africa.

The production opened with a countdown of past West End Eurovisions, parodying the excessive build-up to TV competitions like *X Factor* and *Britain's Got Talent*.

'Fierce' competition was rife amongst the acts and audience members alike, and it was this energy that made West End Eurovision such a good watch.

The involvement of Graham Norton, celebrity judges like Bonnie Langford and Wayne Sleep, and the iconic 1998 Eurovision winner Dana International also made it a great night of entertainment from the get-go.



Other more comedic acts ranged from the tinfoil-esque costumes and shouty vocals of ***Only Fools and Horses The Musical*** to the sass and explosive gymnastic routine from ***Everybody's Talking About Jamie***'s Layton Williams.

However, precision and professionalism were favoured by the judges. A slick three-woman performance from ***Follies*** and the brooding silhouettes and soaring vocals of 'Grande Amore' from ***The Phantom of the Opera*** gained the best comments and standing ovations from the audience.

Alternatively, ***Wicked***'s performance of 'Wild Dances' was perhaps the most provocative. Draped in red cloaks and white bonnets to emulate women in *The Handmaid's Tale*, strong vocals and choreography were abundant with powerful leaps and spins.

The show's cast threatened to upstage ***Phantom of the Opera***, but in the end it was the latter who came out on top with 88 collective points, winning the contest for the second year in a row.

The novelty of ***West End Eurovision*** is expecting the unexpected. With the casts taking on *Eurovision* songs and adapting them to fit their essence – whether that be the slapstick comedy of ***Only Fools and Horses The Musical*** or the spectacle that is ***Phantom of the Opera*** – it is refreshing to see something new from West End productions both old and new.

Jessica Lochan-Jenkinson

This was the first time in the nine-year history of West End Eurovision that the top prize has been won by the same show in successive years.

The Phantom of the Opera was also awarded the new Outstanding Gorgeousness prize, judged by award winning set and costume designer Fly Davies and Jamie Campbell, whose story inspired ***Everybody's Talking About Jamie***.

*The Best Creative prize – decided by the judging panel of West End star Bonnie Langford; dancer, choreographer, director and actor Wayne Sleep; Blue Peter legend Tim Vincent; and Love Island winner Amber Davies (currently playing Judy Bernly in ***9 to 5*** at the Savoy Theatre) – went to the cast of ***Wicked*** performing 'Wild Dances'.*

*The third trophy of the night, theBest Ident, voted for by public text vote, was won by **Everyone's Talking About Jamie.***