



Society : Riverside Players
Production : **SLEEPING BEAUTY**
Date : Saturday 13th December 2014
Venue : Memorial Hall, Old Windsor
Report by : Gordon Bird, NODA Representative, Area 14

Report

I was delighted to be invited to review Riverside Player's 2014 pantomime. Their pantomimes have been of a very high quality for many years so I was looking forward to the evening's entertainment.

This year the Players chose *Sleeping Beauty* by Limelight scripts which was full of the usual gags, puns, jokes, dames and baddies.

This production was my first pantomime of the season and I thoroughly enjoyed it. The singing was wonderful, the choreography crisp, very well cast and the scenery, as always, excellently staged.

Fairy Rose (VICKI ARNOLD)

Fairy Violet (SERENA KELLY)

Fairy Daisy (NIAMH PARKYN)

The three fairies started the show with a slow rendition of Pharrell William's *Happy*. This was very well sung and danced and performed. I was particularly impressed with Niamh who I have seen grown in confidence. She had lovely expressions, acting and reacting in every scene. I have not seen Serena on stage before but she produced a very accomplished performance as Fairy Violet. Her singing was perfectly presented. Vicki never disappoints on stage and once again presented a well observed character. Her fairy was light in character and her singing was once again delightful.

Sniffles (JOHN WESSON)

The part of Sniffles was similar to that of "Oddjob" in *Puss in Boots*, the "Buttons" type character. John clearly has a great knack of playing this type of character, interacting superbly with the audience and fellow cast members alike.

Nurse Penny Cillin (SIMON ARNOLD)

I understand that this is the first time Simon has played the dame part in a pantomime but what a wonderful underplayed performance it was. His comic timing ensured that the gags were well delivered, the innuendos were subtle and his character was spot on. His rapport with the audience, so important for the dame role, was perfect.

Queen Rosemary (JACKIE BURN)

King Basil (NADEEM VALECHA)

These two made a realistic regal performance, commanding the stage with their royal characterisations. Movement was befitting of their roles. Good dominating, imposing voice by Nadeem as befits a regal monarch.

Chambers (ALEX TAGGART)

This was nicely performed role by Alex as the part of Chambers, the Royal Chamberlain. Over the years I have seen Alex develop as a very accomplished performer, who invariably produces a well rehearsed and understood performance.

Poison Ivy (ANNA SHAW)

I have not seen Anna perform for the Players before, but this was a commanding baddie performance. There was a touch of Cruella DeVille in her character, which was not a bad thing, as it gave her that menacing, evil persona. She impressed with her singing too, showing wonderful characterisation in her songs. Well done.

Duck (GERARD GAUGHAN)

Dive (JOHN AHERNE)

Gerard and John produced a good performance as the comic duo. Their interaction with the audience was very good, particularly with the audience participation song, *Jingle Bell Rock*. The attitude in the song *All About That Bass* was very well presented. They worked well with Poison Ivy and good interaction with other characters on stage.

Princess Aurora (CHLOE PICTON)

I have seen Chloe perform a couple of times now and have been impressed with her wonderful facial expressions. She has the ability to present her character's thoughts wonderfully. Her singing was first class: a lovely duet in *Wake Me Up Before You Go Go* but she was mesmerising with *Let It Go*. Her best performance to date – well done!

Prince Rupert (SAMANTHA SOMERVILLE)

This is the second time I have seen Samantha playing the principal boy and again she delivered a strong, believable interpretation. This helped by the use of some lovely expressions and good, purposeful movement. Samantha's strong, confident singing voice was well used very well in her *Wake Me Up and Wake Me Up Before You Go Go*.

Mario (SANDRA PARKYN)

Chef (JILL DADY)

Doctor/Guard (SUSAN BELL)

Peasants (TRISH WELLER & JOSIE BLACKMAN)

Hansel/Page (CONOR BALL)

Gretel (SARAH RANKIN)

Goldilocks (PHOEBE PICTON)

All of these roles were ably performed in their respective scenes. Where more than one character was played, there was clear distinction between the parts (helped by costume but also in delivery). A mention to Sandra, who as Mario, sung very well in *Wake Me Up* with the Prince and the thorns.

Chorus

It is lovely to see the chorus smile during the chorus numbers, it makes such a difference! There were good reactions by the chorus during Nursey's opening speech.

Director (SUSAN PICKLES)

This show was very tightly directed with everyone knowing exactly what to do. All entrances and exits were excellently executed. The show was very well cast. The comedy was particularly drawn out (I liked the scene with the good comedy use of the small sword).

Choreographer (VICKI ARNOLD)

The choreography carefully matched the skills of the cast. Good choreography straight away with the opening of the different version of *Happy*. All of the chorus numbers looked well rehearsed and performed very well on this small stage.

Musical Director (VICKI ARNOLD)

All of the singing was very well delivered, particularly from the Fairies and the princess. The chorus singing was well balanced and showed a lot of energy.

Stage management

The stage was very well managed on the night I watched with good efficient scene changes.

Set Design (SUSAN PICKLES & SIMON ARNOLD)

All of the scenes were well designed, enhanced with some excellent painted backcloths and good use of projected graphics. The opening of the show used graphics displayed onto the proscenium arch, introducing show. Extending the stage with use of a platform helped provide additional space. The scenes also had good painted flats and gold columns in the palace. I loved the bubble graphics!

Scenic Artist (MIKE WOOD)

I am always impressed with the superb painted backdrops used by the Players and this year was no exception, with excellent cottage backdrop showing a good use of colour and perspective. The kitchen backdrop was very good and the castle and palace were very good indeed; all showing good perspective.

Sound & Effects (MARK HASTINGS)

The balance of sound with the radio microphones and sound tracks was, as always, very well presented. All of the effects were nicely performed on cue.

Lighting & Projection (ROGER LEWISTON & JONATHAN STACEY)

The lighting and projected images were used to great effect. All of the lighting cues were on time. I like the use of projection, particularly the bubble effect. The lighting was imaginative as well as traditional – use of red light for baddie, for example. Good use of projected images at the beginning of act 2.

Costumes

The range and colour of costumes for the cast was spot on and appropriate to the production. I liked the co-ordinated, for example the use of blues for the king, queen and chancellor. The dame costumes were suitably outlandish! I did note that there seemed to be an issue with the princess blue skirt though? Other than that, all of the costumes fitted perfectly.

Properties

All of the properties were appropriate to this production.

Makeup

Makeup was very well applied to all of the actors, but particularly to the Dame.

Front of house

A lovely warm reception from this friendly society was extended to my wife and I. The large audience were treated equally warmly and aided to an enjoyable evening.

Programme

8 pages, colour cover, good sized and clear coloured cast head shots. All of the essential information was produced (cast list, list of scenes and songs) and was excellent value, considering the players do not make any charge for their programmes.

The first pantomime of the season was not a disappointment and thoroughly enjoyed another very well rehearsed and presented performance.



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