



Be inspired by amateur theatre

Society : Riverside Players
Production : **SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS**
Date : Saturday 12th DECEMBER 2015
Venue : Memorial Hall, Old Windsor
Report by : Gordon Bird, NODA Representative, Area 14

Show Report

I was very pleased to be invited to Riverside Players seasonal pantomime of Alan P Frayn's Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs.

Alan P Frayn's scripts are very popular as he has an established record of providing well known stories with book balance of jokes and puns.

This production portrayed the usual pantomime elements; good comic script, lots of jokes, strong singing and enjoyable dances.

It was very well cast with all the principals providing an entertaining performance.

The script was tight, the direction well observed and the society ensured that everyone had a good time.

FAIRY FORTUNE (SUSAN PICKLES)

I always think that any show needs a strong start and with Susan's experience we were not disappointed. Susan's role as the good fairy was in safe hands. With first-rate annunciation every word was heard.

QUEEN AVARICE (VICKI ARNOLD)

This was a wonderful evil performance by Vicki. Her singing and diction were once again of a very high quality. I particularly liked the song "*Black magic*" which was very well sung. Playing the part of the "baddie", Vicki oozed through the numbers, moving with ease around the stage and having a wonderful rapport with audience and cast alike.

SPIRIT OF THE MIRROR (JILL DADY)

This was a nice little role by Jill as the "voice and picture" of the mirror. Her intonation was good and could understand everything that was said. Her characterisation was consistent and believable.

SNOW WHITE (SAMANTHA SOMERVILLE)

I have seen Samantha perform the lead in several pantomimes over years but normally in the "breeches" or "principal boy" role so it was lovely to see her in a dress performing the principal girl.

As always here singing was full of justifiable confidence and her interaction with the cast and audience was excellent. The costume of course helped, but she looked perfect as Snow White.

SLURP (ALEX TAGGART)

This was a convincing performance by Alex as the “buttons” role. He has grown in confidence over the years and I felt that his singing has improved and did a reasonable performance leading “*What Makes You Beautiful*”, the opening number. He excelled in the trance scene, producing a believable dream like state.

EDNA BUCKET (GERARD VAUGHAN)

My view is that you do need a strong dame to ensure that all of the nonsense is carried out without a hitch and requires a good understanding of the audience: correctly accessing the mood and know instinctively when to push a gag or leave it alone. Gerard had all of these qualities and looked completely natural on stage as the dame. His rapport with the audience was very good indeed. The interaction with the cast was equally well observed. Movement and characterisation was first class. Well done on an excellent dame.

CHUCKLES (NADEEM VALECHA)

I have seen Nadeem several times over this last year and felt that this performance was his best to date. Starting with a good entrance, his mannerisms, characterisation and movement were very good indeed. As the comic role of the pantomime, he worked hard to interact with the audience and I felt his hard work was rewarded. He could have overacted, but did not, and produced a very good performance.

JUSTICE QUILL (JOHN AHERNE)

John exudes a commanding stature and therefore his role as Justice Quill was excellently cast. Assisted by a good costume and his natural good posture, his characterisation was very well performed. His comic timing was excellent, knowing how to produce a punch line perfectly.

SCRIBBLES (SUSAN BELL)

This is a lovely role to perform – seemingly the “a basket short of a picnic” part, the Scribbles character is sure to receive a lot of laughs and you all know that this character will turn the tables on her supposedly “learned colleague”. Susan’s inflection was excellent and every word was heard without any problem. I was particularly impressed with the nicely pointed lines, each carrying the right emphasis and weight of delivery.

PRINCE FERDINAND (CHLOE PICTON)

I have always been impressed with Chloe’s performances and once again she did not disappoint with a very comfortable performance as the principal boy. Her mannerisms were perfectly executed, her

movement purposeful, her characterisation spot on. Her singing, never in doubt, was once again of a high standard. Another very good performance – well done!

BRAINY (KRYSTINA HOUGHTON)

SMILEY (LAT GREENAWAY)

BLUSHFUL (SARAH RANKIN)

SNOOZY (SERENA KELLY)

GRUMBLY (TRISH WELLER)

SNIFFLE (JOSIE BLACKBURN)

DOZY (CONOR BALL)

I have put these seven characters together as they tended to come on stage together. They worked very well as a unit, entrance and exits could not be faulted. All of them had a clear character and maintained them throughout. I loved the staging with the some of the scenes involving the dwarfs crawling on their knees. *“Shake it off”* was exceptionally well sung and with good movement it was a memorable performance by this close knit group of performers.

SPIRITS OF THE FOREST (PHOEBE PICTON AND APRIL STANFORD)

Both Phoebe and April did very well with the opening session, miming in unison with Fairy Fortune. They both looked confident and were obviously well rehearsed.

VILLAGERS AND SERVANTS

This was a relatively small chorus part as many of these parts doubled up as Dwarfs or other roles. Nonetheless, the chorus knew their parts well and the dances and songs were well rehearsed and delivered. Movement was well directed and there were no issues with entrances and exits. I would have liked to have seen a little more individuality with the characterisation but as each of the members had another role to play, I can understand that their efforts were concentrated elsewhere.

DIRECTOR (SIMON ARNOLD)

This was a very slick production, with all the parts seemingly very well cast and everyone certainly knew what they were doing. The movement was very well defined with no blocking issues – which is not easy with so many on stage and with such a relatively small performance area.

MUSICAL DIRECTOR AND CHOREOGRAPHER (VICKI ARNOLD)

The singing and choreographed movement was of a very high standard and is probably some of the best I have seen this society perform. All of the principals sung very well indeed and I liked the song choices – a mixture of well known tunes and modern songs for younger audience. The chorus singing was confident (and loud) and it was good to see (and hear) everyone singing!

LIGHTING (ROGER LEWISTON)

As with previous pantomimes with this society, the lighting was of a high standard with all of the scenes being appropriately lit and all the faces being seen. The lighting effect for the mirror was very well executed. All of the cues were on time.

SOUND & EFFECTS (MARK HASTINGS)

I do like the idea of the projected welcome on the proscenium arch – which was also used for to beam the song words for the audience participation number. All of the leads were mic'd and there appeared to be no issues – no unwanted feedback, no falling mics, all of the mics were “live” when needed and “dead” when not – and although this may seem obvious, I have seen many productions where this is not always produced consistently. All of the sound effects were on cue. The balance of the backing tracks and live performers could not be bettered. Well done.

STAGE MANAGER (SIMON ARNOLD)

Simon and his team managed the scene changes, properties changes with effortless ease – there did not appear to be any issues as each scene change was prompt and quick.

SET

Each year this group has a number of painted backdrops that reveal the location of the scenes. As with previous years, they were all very well painted and their effect was stunning. The production opened with a blue drop with white clouds and a castle, setting the scene perfectly. Each additional painted backdrop set the scene perfectly and the perspectives were very well defined.

COSTUMES

There was a wonderful range of costumes that matched the characters perfectly. For example, the purple dress and cloak worn by the Queen immediately depicted the character. All of the costumes looked like they fitted and looked clean and well pressed (not easy considering this was the last night of the run). Well done to all involved.

PROPERTIES

All of the properties looked appropriate to the production.

PROGRAMME

The eight page programme was informative, having all of the information needed for the production. I was pleased to see a list of characters and cast in the middle pages alongside a useful list of songs and scenes. I wish other societies noted this as it does make it so much easier to find! The photographs were of a good size and quality.

I always enjoy reviewing the pantomimes performed by this society as they are of a high standard. This year the performances were once again were excellent and cannot wait to see what is in store for next year.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gordon Bird'.

Gordon Bird
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