



Society : The Chameleons Amateur Dramatic Society
Production : Sleeping Beauty
Date : 16th January 2011 (16.30 performance)
Venue : Paul Daisley Hall Brent Town Hall, Wembley
Report by : Harvey Kesselman

Report

It is always a pleasure to see the Annual Pantomime put on by this company, it really starts my year off with a bang. This was the twelfth pantomime I have seen this society perform, and it never seems to amaze me that all of these have been 'home grown'. Written by two members of the society, Robert Spolander and Radnor Everett, and based loosely on the traditional fairy story, it keeps away from the 'double entendre' that is usually heard in most of the pantomimes performed today.

It also seems to have become a tradition with this company to have two or three characters, before the pantomime actually starts, appearing through the audience, ending up in the auditorium, and getting them prepared for what was to follow. What they call 'a warm up' in television terms. This certainly worked very well and the laughter and buzz of excitement and anticipation ran through the theatre.

After a lively overture the curtains opened to reveal the Dame explaining to Princess Ruby (and to the audience) the story of what had happened to her on the day she was born. There was a scrim which when opened revealed very well dressed young singers comprising twenty one young children plus five adults, that made up the chorus. All their costumes were bright and cheerful and their performance both in singing and dancing throughout the pantomime was great.

Ben Parker, as Nanny Nelly, wearing outrageous costumes and extraordinary footwear where each shoe was a different colour to its partner, immediately created a very good rapport with the audience. I remember seeing him as Widow Twankey in Aladdin in 2005, where he was indeed very funny. Although his performance on this occasion was enjoyable and funny, I did find the falsetto he used becoming rather shrill and, as a result, his dialogue was not always very clear. There is no problem in the Dame going OTT, but there has to be a limit to the interpretation and too much shrillness can eventually grate on ones hearing. However the audience took to him and he deserved the applause he received at the end. As the young Princess Ruby, **Michelle Edwards** had very little to do at the beginning, but came into her own with a lovely performance during the rest of the act. She continued to delight during the rest of the show. Her singing was very pleasant and she was well matched by **Gemma Holloway** who was well cast as the thigh slapping Prince Opal. Their scenes together and their duets were most enjoyable. **Arlette Kamellard** was well cast as Fairy Emerald; her dialogue was strong and clear, as was her singing, a very good all-round performance, well supported by **Simone Lee-Tyrassek**, as Fairy Sapphire and **Kat Priest** as Fairy Amber. **Nikki Amory** was a wonderful villain (ess) as the evil Amethyst. Every entrance was rightly greeted with boos from the audience, and her snarling dialogue was great. How we were all delighted when the spell she had cast failed, and she was finally defeated. Another strong performance as Aide – de – camp to the thigh slapping Prince Opal, with incredible make-up was **Ian Byrne**, as Jasper, he had the pleasant task of being one of the characters who started the 'warm-up' before the pantomime actually started. He was joined by King Pearl (**Steve Angus**) and Queen Pearl (**Lauren Sproule**) who all created just the right atmosphere and got the audience in the right mood for what was to follow. A very funny performance was given by **Robert Spolander** costumed in a most outlandish costume who, as Captain Chameleon, tried desperately to keep his

troops in order. There were some wonderful costumes worn by the 'troops': **Ian Ramsdale** as Corporal Cat; **Catherine Waters**, Private Piglet (with the appropriate squealing noises); **Tone Richardson**, Private Wolf; **Daniel Conceprio**, Private Weasel and a super costume worn by **Rachel Simpson** as Sergeant Snail, who moved very slowly as a snail should. **Jason Kosky** was a suitably regal King Topaz, and the whole cast worked well together.

What was really impressive was the way all the children sang and danced throughout. Their costumes were bright; they were smiling, obviously enjoying themselves. Considering this was their final performance after what must have been a very tiring week, they all still managed to look fresh. It is only right that they all deserve their names to be included in this report, all twenty-one of them: **Victoria Bayes, Aine Black, Ellis Coffey, Katie Dennison, Jodie Johnson, Lucy Kennedy, Sinead King, Amelia Kirby, Yogietha Kirushnamoorthy, Shantel Lee-Tyrassek, Kishna Mavji, Jack McCourt, Junelle Muge, Yara Samaha, Aarti Shah, Keval Shah, Rassika Selvanendam, Eleanor Smith, Alice Sproule, Paige Sproule and Roisin Walsh.** They were augmented by five 'adults'; **Seema Ali, Karen Deehan, Donna Dempsey, Lisa King and Helen Stevens.**

Getting an audience involved in a pantomime is so important for the success of any performance, and the cast of Sleeping Beauty certainly achieved this. Lead by the company, especially the Pearly King and Queen, with a rousing singing of 'The Lambeth Walk', the theatre was filled with sound. This together with the usual bringing on stage several small members of the audience, and the applause the show received, brought this company's excellent pantomime to an end.

The whole production team deserves great praise. The music was certainly foot tapping and the orchestra, under the direction of **Janette Hutchinson**, played well throughout. The choreography was devised by **Hannah Bain** with **Lauren Spoule** as her assistant; Stage Manager, **'Mac'**, with **Zoë Roxen** as DSM; Lighting, **Chris Davis**; Sound **Alan Foss**; excellent costumes came from Harlequin Costumiers & The Costume Store plus additional ones from the Society; Production Manager, **Robert Spolander**. Director **Stuart Everett** had produced a most enjoyable show, although I have to say there did seem to be a problem with projection, some lines were not very clear and I did hear a comment made by people sitting at the back of the auditorium, that they had had a problem in hearing some of the dialogue.

I found the programme most informative and well presented and should be entered for the programme design award (basic class) at the NODA London AGM.