

NORTH ESSEX THEATRE GUILD SHOWCASE FESTIVAL 2017-18

Little Waltham Drama Group

“Snow White” by Ben Crocker directed by Hugh Godfrey

Adjudicated by Andrew Hodgson

20/2/18

FRONT OF HOUSE

As always at this address, the F.O.H. team were extremely welcoming, attentive and efficient. I greatly appreciated being accommodated at the Saturday Matinee performance after my false start on Friday! The interval tea tray, containing a delicious “apple” cake was a lovely treat, thank you! There was an excited buzz from the audience of attentive youngsters before the show began, as we were serenaded with a selection of musical standards from musicians Dave and Trevor! The glossy programme was attractively designed and informative. The long list of acknowledgements on the opening page was a thoughtful touch.

SETTINGS

The stage is small but a front apron adds extra space and provides access to the rest of the hall for various comings and goings! The settings were colourful and traditional, with the castle, forest, cottage etc all in place to provide appropriate fairy tale backgrounds to the much-loved tale. I absolutely loved the novel concept for the Magic Mirror which worked beautifully. The stage crew did a good job in ensuring scenes moved efficiently from one to another. Properties were very good; all in suitably pantomimic mode!

LIGHTING/SOUND

The story of “Snow White” needs lots of atmosphere and the technical elements of the production certainly provided this! Thunder and lighting, a dappled forest, the eerie Mirror room were all highly effective! A follow spot was used to highlight the performers and cues for both lighting and sound were smoothly achieved. Sound effects were generally excellent. Well done!

COSTUMES

These were an outstanding feature of the production; a visually rich mixture of colours and textures attuned carefully to the characters. I adored the Gnomes’ colourful and quirky outfits, complete with pointed caps labelled with the first initial of each of their names! Their makeup and wigs added to their comical appearance! The Dame’s costumes were correctly O.T.T. However, I wondered, given her status, if she would have been so grandly dressed at the start of the show? The camouflage worn by the Dame and Danny in the forest was an inspired touch! The Queen was appropriately dramatic in her black ensemble and wig whilst Black Wing had a definite touch of Richard the Third in his apparel. No attempt was made to make Snow White look like the Disney Princess, she was very much her own person and the Prince was handsomely dressed and looked very dashing. Both the animals’ costumes were a cuddlesome joy! An excellent job from the Wardrobe team, well done!

MUSIC/CHOREOGRAPHY

Bravo to the resident musicians, Dave and Trevor, under the Musical Direction of Chrissy Gould. The guys did a terrific job in accompanying the pantomime at a good pace and providing appropriate percussion to enhance the action! You really can't beat live music in a pantomime! The chosen songs were tuneful and fitted the story well. The cast sang with gusto and confidence. Movement was attuned to the abilities of the cast, and everything looked well-rehearsed although I felt that the ballet went on a little too long. However well done everyone!

PERFORMANCES

QUEEN CALIGULA: I thoroughly enjoyed Lallie Godfrey's throwaway style of villainy; her tongue seemed to be slightly in her cheek as she went about her dastardly deeds! She was haughty, vain and selfish and thoroughly deserved the jeers she received from the audience!

SNOW WHITE: Hannah Veasey was no simpering heroine but a forthright and confident woman who more than held her own! Hannah had a good rapport with the audience and her fellow players. She had a strong, clear speaking and singing voice. Well done!

PRINCE FREDERICK: I was delighted that this production had a traditional, female Principal Boy! Young Molly Butcher played this dashing hero with a confidence that belied her years as she strode round the stage providing bravery and romance in equal measures!

DOLLY DUMPLING: I think I am right in saying that this was Ian Pridding's first Dame and I hope not his last! He presented a warm and comedic character without ever going over the top, and in his persona reminded me slightly of Su Pollard! Ian related well to the audience and created a nice double act with Danny. Very well done!

BLACK WING: Brian Corrie always brings great comedy to his performances, and this baddie was no exception. His facial reactions were a hoot! Looking like Laurence Olivier as Richard the Third and armed with a mid-European (?) accent, Brian went about his evil business working very well opposite Lallie Godfrey as the equally awful Queen. Brian's transformation into the crow provided us with extra fun! Well done!

DANNY DUMPLING: Kathy Jiggins played very well opposite Ian Pridding to create an endearing double act, their capers in the forest were particularly funny. Kathy gave a warm and friendly characterisation of the none- too- bright Danny, and was definitely an audience favourite!

SPEAKTRUE: The whole concept of the Magic Mirror in this production was inspired and Bill Ward made a real character out of Speaktrue. His reactions to the events going on around him were an absolutely hilarious!

BOGWORT & STINKWORT: Ken Little and Martin Final provided us with an outstanding double act in true Laurel and Hardy tradition! They were completely contrasted in personality and appearance (I swear I could smell Stinkwort from my seat!) and they were very funny, with Ken Little's seemingly canny Bogwort constantly undermined by the none-too-bright Stinkwort. Their physicality and facial reactions were a joy! Very well done!

WONDERWINGS & FAIRY GOODHEART: Here was another delightful duo with Kim Travell's comically quirky learner fairy contrasted with the more glamorous and experienced Wonderwings of Vicky Weavers. They both looked just right and sparkled beautifully adding a lovely pinch of magic to the show! Well done to Vicky for making capital out of her accidental trip on the steps! Well done both!

STORYTELLER: A motherly cameo from Chrissy Gould who was positioned on a rocking chair stage left. It was a shame that Chrissy's opening lines were drowned out by a crying baby at this performance but she carried on regardless and added to the friendly feeling of this production.

FANG & BRUIN: Two very cuddly pantomime animals in the capable paws of Jeanette Smith and Becky Barros. The audience loved them! The "Teddy Bears Picnic" number was a treat and Fang's antics were a lot of fun! He even found a voice at the end of the show! More magic!

THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN: This script addressed the issue of these vitally important characters in an unusual and effective way. I had wondered why they were on stage in the Mirror room but when it was revealed that they were garden gnomes on whom the Queen had cast a spell it all made sense! Little Waltham fielded some of their most experienced performers to play this endearing gang; it was therefore a joy to see Linda, Maria, Viv, Helen, Nicola, Jenni and Ash work so well together! Each Gnome's individual personality came across and each had her/his moment to shine. The ballet was very well performed and they all looked just right! Very well done!

SUMMARY

Hugh Godfrey's production was a prime example of a really traditional village pantomime in the best possible sense. It was colourful, funny and had a great feeling of team playing from the cast. Ben Crocker's script stuck closely to the original tale but had some interesting variations of its own. On such a small stage, and with a large cast, some masking was inevitable and there were occasions when things were allowed to go on a little too long but overall the pace of the production was very good and kept the mainly young audience engrossed. I came away feeling thoroughly entertained! Well done to all involved!

Best wishes
Andrew Hodgson (Adjudicator)