

## Cinderella

A review of Rotherfield Pantomime January 19<sup>th</sup> 2018

Knowing how much I love a Pantomime, Andy Miller called to ask if I wanted a free ticket to Cinderella, Rotherfield Players Pantomime – and the catch? I had to write a review of the Show. Never having written a review for another Society, but not one to pass a gift by.....I said 'Yes'.

So there I was at Friday night's performance sitting in the best tiered seats, watching the hall filling nicely. Front of House were busy, the Audience was buzzing and at 7.30 sharp the bar shutters snapped shut and the Show was underway.

I'd studied the excellent programme, which was well worth reading, giving the Audience an insight into the hard work it takes to make a show come to life. I admired the first backcloth, which was very colourful, and sat back to enjoy the show.

From the start the set design and art work was impressive and beautifully painted, the costumes were appropriate and of a very high standard. The Cast were very well dressed throughout; the only costumes I was doubtful over were the Ugly Sisters hunting outfits – as their first entrance they looked too mannish for me, and ugly. However, as they changed so frequently, I was not disappointed for long – they were better dressed but equally as ugly as women!

The young Chorus was impressive throughout and I particularly enjoyed the first Chorus – the Hunt, great dancing by the Riders, good chase by the Beagles, and a very cheeky Fox – well played Fox. Throughout the show the Chorus was attentive, actively took part and, wondrous to behold, smiled a lot!!

The Prince (Heather Campbell) and Dandini (Kate Awcock) were a well suited pairing, and the conceit of them changing places was unusual and well played, with plenty of bravado. The synchronized thigh slapping was great. Both had very good voices and I enjoyed their polished performances.

Cinderella (Jes Lunn) lived up to expectation being pretty, likeable and someone we could root for. She enjoyed a sympathetic relationship with poor fated Buttons. Lucky, lovely Cinderella – we all know whatever her hardship she would triumph. Poor old Buttons (Rob Darling) - we all know he's not going to get the girl, but how we hoped he would. If only he'd had a Fairy Godfather.....I loved Buttons – he played such a good part, working hard with the Audience from start to finish, ensuring they joined in with gusto (not that they needed much encouragement). Cinderella and Buttons had some brilliant set pieces together – the apple joke made me laugh a lot, the kiss – or not, the final leaving. So sad!!

The Ugly Sisters (Thomas Ballantine Dykes and James Gallifant) were particularly horrible at times to poor Cinderella – let's hope their 'Ticket to Heaven' gets torn up - and to each other – I wasn't quite sure that Annie(Thomas) knew what Fannie (James) was doing when she left the Stage, but the situation resolved when they were back on script. They were ably put in their place several times by Baron Hardup (delightfully underplayed by Andy Miller) who had great asides and kept the squabbling Sisters under control. He shouldn't think of retiring yet – he has far too much stage presence, and I never noticed if he forgot his lines.

Fannie and Annie were able to shine in their solos; Fannie being in an over the top joke with Buttons, which everyone knew would go wrong, and Annie singing a dreadfully tuneful (?) rap – ‘The girls are back in town’. Dressed in a tent dress, luminous spikey pink wig, with black eyes as big as saucers, Annie has haunted my dreams ever since the Show – she was truly scary.

The Fairy Godmother (Becky Sims) was transformed from an old Hag, who was unfortunately not named in the programme, but who gamely managed the Audience’s expectation that she was a ‘baddy’, until they realised she was in fact a ‘goody’. The Real Fairy was just what we would have expected – all glamour and glitter, gold and gloss, and she had a fine singing voice, coping well with a difficult song at the end of the first half.

I always like a ghost scene and the Rotherfield Ghost (Larry Robinson) was led through a stalking scene, until he was scared off stage by an Ugly Sister. Well done Ghost – a small but necessary part well played.

The cast all had strong singing voices, and were ably supported by the talented Orchestra. There were times when they were a little overpowering, which was a shame, but it was pleasing to have various styles of songs, played with aplomb. I was sorry not to have a final reprise, which would have allowed the Audience more time to demonstrate to all the Performers and Crew the appreciation they deserved.

Effort of the Stage Crew, Lighting and Sound are never truly appreciated by the Audience – it all just happens. The various scene changes moved quickly and efficiently. Effects such as the transformation scene when the Coach appeared was cleverly achieved, the Coach beautifully illuminated behind the see through curtain. The Lighting throughout the Show was effective. The Sound Crew had a few hiccups, with feedback in the first half but this was remedied by half time.

Congratulations to Derek Holland, and his Team both on and off stage, for a Pantomime that held the Audience captive for two and a half hours. The direction was strong, with plenty of action throughout and impressive attention to detail - the foot tapping, the funny voice, the handkerchief, the apple, the weight – although I wasn’t sure about the consequence of pressing the button.

As the Prince sang in Act 2, ‘Oh What a Night’ – well done Rotherfield Players, a good night was had by all. Thank you

Jackie Manktelow

From Frant Pantomime and Dramatic Society