

**ROTHERFIELD PLAYERS
SLEEPING BEAUTY BY ALAN FRAYN
2 FEBRUARY 2008**

Some theatre is about the intensity of emotion generated by a very few people – with pantomime its all about the Director's ability to communicate vision to a large team and the Producer's ability to summon vast resource from the ether. Reading the programme notes ahead of the performance gave us a clue what to expect. Sarah Truelove is noted for deft and clever direction, Jo Evans has vast experience of directing the musical side and having three choreographers says the rest.

With over twenty five performers on stage at times we often did not know where to look to focus on some of the budding stars. Lovely little bits of stage business such as Verity Pettit's pretty but calamity prone dancing fairy and the perfectly timed postal repartee between court messengers Jacky Jenkins and Louise Coe spoke of hours of rehearsal time.

Energising the audience whilst getting both laughs and sympathy is not easy but Kate Awcock's performance as palace stooge Muddles was simply brilliant whilst Derek Holland as the Dame reminded us of Ronnie Barker at his very best, enough said. Rumbustious musical routines rocked us through the evening. The energy and glow coming from some of the younger members could solve any fuel crisis.

Sweetly regal Emma Williams as the Queen floated gracefully through the perils of being a new mother whilst in contrast, Kate Organ's marvellously entertaining bad witch drew images of a musically malevolent Bette Midler with PMT. The script was excellent with lots of both modern and locally topical references which gave the audience plenty to laugh about. The main romantic interest held up very well, thigh slapping Becky Syms brought more than a hint of a lecherous Flashman to the principal boy role. The vivacious younger princess, Alice Burrell, gave a sensuous opening of the song "Another Brick In The Wall" which heralded a brilliant ensemble routine. Either side of her statutory hundred year sleep, Natalie Sexton as the poised eighteen year old princess sang beautifully and danced into the arms of her prince with grace and élan.

Lynn Lunn was born to be a fairy godmother and always twinkles around the stage. The younger stars of the cast were no doubt grateful for the experienced support and poise of Jon Alcock as the believably ineffectual King and suitably croned-up witches Alison Organ and Ros Williams.

This slick, well attended production rollicked along only rarely losing a bit of pace, delighting children and grandparents and providing a great evening out.

Peter Thompson