

And now for something a little different...



Faringdon Community Theatre could well have ended up all at sea with their latest pantomime. Sinbad the Sailor is not, after all, entirely in the traditional panto mould — for while the principal boy is a girl alright, the dame is, well... a dame!

But like all pantomimes, it all came out fine in the end. It was a lot of

fun, and very, very colourful. Indeed, the lasting impression for me was left by the splendid array of costumes which were extraordinarily imaginative and striking.

Beryl Rees, who made her debut with the Community Theatre by producing their last play, showed that she is as good on the stage as off

it, by making the part of Salubria, Sinbad's mother, very much her own. She made a delightful foil to the splendidly strident Mike Durham, who seemed to have been tailor-made for a macho sea captain.

The other 'pairing' brought together Sinbad, played charmingly if a bit gently for a principal boy, by Lucy Walden, and the merchant's daughter, Selina, again played rather low-key by the usually-exuberant Debbie Lock.

Alistair Warner made the best of a weakish character, Prince Hassan, who also got the girl, in the person of Sarah Nutbrown playing Princess Shining Pearl.

Carole Tappenden, sporting a very fetching new head of hair, was splendidly swashbuckling as Baba-or-Rum the pirate, and Alan Taylor was a suitably menacing Black Abdullah, the Magician.

Jo Webster and Carolyn Taylor gave a lively knockabout performance as Ali Bad and Ali Worse, while good supporting characters

came from Peter Webster as the grasping merchant Mustapha Sequin, Ieuan Thomas as the grand Caliph of Bagdad, and Jenni Summerfield as the Peri of the Ring.

A special mention for what surprisingly turned out to be one of the show's star characters, the Old Man of the Sea — thanks to a hilarious and somewhat individual interpretation by Walther Schoonenberg. Philip Hurst brought forth a chorus of 'Ahs' from the audience as a baby elephant, Julian Probert was master of the gong, Clare Rackham was the chamberlain, and Louise Butler was an official in the slave market.

And that is not to mention a whole horde of townspeople, pirates, sailors, courtiers and spirits of the forest, which happily brought lots of children into the action, all splendidly turned out and in good voice. The pantomime was directed by Dave Headey and Joan Lee, and Debra Warner was musical director and pianist. *I.S.*