

Oxfordshire Drama Network

ODN Review

Director, Debbie Lock, set the mood for 'Candleford' as soon as we took our seats, front of house ladies all in period costume and the simple country dance style music under the direction of Carol Warren-Smith, being played on the stage. There was even a fortune teller wandering through the audience!

Performed 'in the round' we felt involved as the story unfolded, although it was quite hard to imagine feeling the snowy cold in a very warm hall.

The post office was set at one end with the anvil opposite, period costumed men and women moved various pieces of furniture onto the centre for scene changes - I would have liked the musicians to have carried on playing until the scenes were set, after all they could see the scenes being changed - sometimes there were silent pauses, however this is a minor quibble.

The whole cast entered, singing with lovely harmonies, from different parts of the audience, representing all aspects of village life. Laura Timms, (Clare Matthews) as narrator, started a little too fast but soon settled and gave a pleasant performance, she was perhaps a little too pretty for the line 'obviously not in the front line when good looks were given out' but it gave us all a laugh.

Dorcas Lane, (Amanda Linstead) was played with grace, dignity, kindness and good diction. I loved the mimed door when Miss Lane caught the nosey maid Zillah eavesdropping.

Zillah, (Carolyn Taylor) was terrific, really good facial expressions, perhaps she needed more ageing make-up? All the make-up looked really natural, especially as we were so close, but there was a line mentioning Zillah's great age and I simply didn't believe it! (I didn't hear her 'banging about upstairs' either)

Looney Joe, (Katie Dyet) was very good, I didn't know it was a girl until I looked at the programme, she was totally believable and kept up the character even when singing at the back of the choir. We believed in Joe and wanted to help him - careful thought had obviously gone into making this character true.

I thought the hunting scene was nicely dressed and the mimed horses very well done and Real Food on the plates was a touch of genius - difficult for actors to eat and drink and speak lines but they all did it very well.

The Hunt Ball was nicely set and the country plough lads with their Morris Dancing were fun

I thought Miss Lane would have had a couple of nice easy chairs in her house instead of the upright ones but again a minor point.

Nice finale with the cast gathering together to sing in harmony once again

There was such a big cast it would be impossible to mention them all but I liked the Sgt's (John Taylor) soldierly bearing, Minnie (Alex Aspel) was nicely acted although a little hard to hear sometimes, Mrs Gubbins (Karen Whiffen) was sufficiently grumpy although not all the time! (would she have worn trousers?) the three blacksmiths were fun and

sang well and the religious postman, (Adrian Wells) swaggered happily with his, not too heavy, postbag.

The production team headed by Sarah Varnom gave Director, Debbie Lock, every assistance towards this entertaining production.

Director, Debbie Lock, deserves many congratulations on this production. The attention to detail was phenomenal and when added to the well rehearsed, (prompt Jayne Isham not needed), talented cast we were presented with a very enjoyable evening.

Deidre Jones