

Cinderella

A pantomime by Peter Webster
Performed in Jan/Feb 2001 at the Faringdon Community College
Directed by Karen Whiffen

Cinderella - A magical show

'IT WAS MAGIC!' This remark tossed away by a younger member of the audience at Faringdon's annual panto a few weeks ago of course summed up the whole thing in three words. The story of Cinderella meeting her handsome prince thanks to the intervention of a fairy godmother relies on magic, and Faringdon Dramatic Society provided it in good measure. And it wasn't restricted to the fireworks which heralded the transformation of a pumpkin into a coach and Cinderella's rags into beautiful ball gown.

Faringdon is indeed fortunate to have a rich mix of the talents needed to put on a show like this. As well as local playwright Pete Webster, the Dramatic Society also boasts set designers, carpenters, painters, seamstresses, musicians, sound and light technicians with skills any one of which most drama groups would give their eye teeth for. And that's before anyone sets foot on the stage!

As usual, Peter Webster provided us with a few twists to the basic tale to keep us intrigued. Cinderella and her father, well played by Laura Thompson and John Taylor, were the traditional centre- piece of the plot and always attracted our sympathy. Buttons however, played by Gary Thompson (no relation), took his longing for Cinders just a bit too far by threatening to spoil the plot, though of course we knew he'd realise the error

who stole the show with their duets, their disputes, and of course their over-the-top dressing for the ball scene, which required an army of no less than four costumiers on stage to help them.

The Royal Family were represented by a bossy queen (Mary Mountford-Lister), a henpecked king (Simon Wisbey) and a classic pantomime principal boy in the prince, played by Karen Price. But we were also introduced to a couple of their cabinet members, the Chancellor and the Foreign Secretary, who in an effort to conserve royal coffers took on the decorating of the palace ballroom with predictably disastrous results. Debbie Lock and Rachel Coward excelled as the pair, who were amply rewarded with the ugly sisters a marriage partners. But back to the magic. Kathryn Whiffen was a youthful fairy godmother (though of course fairies are ageless) who opened the show with a delightfully spoonerised resume of the plot and then kept it going with the aid of Boot, Cinderella's mute cat, played by Rebecca Lock. Also on hand in the animal line were the mice and frogs who attend Cinderella's carriage - four excellent young dancers, Lauren Bates, Pippa Garrard, Gemma Hopkins and Lily Smith.

The seven-piece orchestra, led by musical director Debra Warner, provided robust accompaniment to all the musical numbers including the big choruses which showed to the full just

of his ways in the end.

The wicked stepmother became instead the bossy aunt from hell (Debra Keasal) who got her own way most of the time by shrieks, stamps and lashing out with her folded fan, which looked as though it hurt those on the receiving end. But of course it was her daughters Nausea and Hernia - Allyn Richardson and Tim Gerry -

how many cheerful children were involved in this production as dancers, singers and attendants. Karen Whiffen, making her directorial debut, must be justifiably proud of the show and I look forward to seeing some more teamwork (or should that be magic?) from Faringdon Dramatic Society next year.

Edward Lloyd

Newspaper article with kind permission of 'The Faringdon Folly'