

National Operatic & Dramatic Association

London Area Report



Society
Production
Date
Venue
Report by

FARINGDON DRAMATIC SOCIETY
Pirates of the Faribbean
26 Jan - 3 Feb 2007
Faringdon Junior School
Gareth Jeremy. Region 12

Thank you for your invitation to your latest production. It is always a pleasure to visit your Society, and as you know, your Pantomime is always the last each year on the circuit – and I have never been disappointed with the production. Once again, Writer/Director Nick Coard produced the goods. At any show, the front window is Front of House, and I wish to congratulate all those people who had transformed a School Hall into a lair for pirates etc – and the Front of House team were dressed as part of the show – the parrot on Dave Headey's shoulder was very well-behaved! Principal Cast: Old Man of the Sea (John Taylor) – the ideal person to narrate the show. He looked a typical "old salt", excellent clear diction, and very good make-up

Buttercup (Grace Anderson) – looked good on stage- confident in her character, sang her solos (and duet with Billy) in a sweet melodious voice, her diction was clear, and it was obvious that she had enjoyed her role. Well done.

Commodore (Cleve Forty) – another fine performance – excellent costume, and he was very much a person to look up to". Fine rendering as the "pop star" – he may still get into the Top Ten of the Faringdon Hit Chart!

Dame (Gary Bates) – Fine make-up and excellent costume. These are some of the main ingredients to make the actor get into the role they are playing – and this was the case for Gary. Once he was on the stage, he was out to enjoy his role, and get the audience on his side – and hopefully to get them to enjoy him. This he did. He put a lot of effort into his solo spot – perhaps he should have brought his neighbours dogs along to be his "backing group"!!

Billy (Elli Morton) – Confident performer – looked good and moved well around the stage. I liked her rendering of "Build Me Up Buttercup – Don't Break My Heart" with the chorus backing. There was a strong bond between her and Buttercup – this was well illustrated in the song "I'll Take You Just the Way You are". Well done.

Soldier 1 (Rob Thorp) and Soldier 2 (Grace Logan) – They complemented each other very well – it was a "team effort" in all that they did. There were times when I felt they could have moved the dialogue along at a brisker pace – a nice cameo when they were in the boat.

Poop (Joe Benson) and Scoop (Katie Dyet) – These two cannot be separated either, as they were the "sidekicks" to the Pirate King. They reacted well to each other, and obeyed all that was instructed of them by the Pirate King. Excellent facial expressions, and they were enthusiastic in all that they did. Well done.

Pirate King (Lesley Phillips) – again, entered into the true spirit of the character – good facial, and eye contact with some of the characters around her, and her singing of "I Am A Pirate King" at the opening of Act 2 came over very strongly. The two sidekicks, and the King came over to the audience in a powerful manner. Well done.

Ant (John Taylor) and Check (Euan Coard) – The appearance of the daddy seagull and his son on the wall brought a smile on the faces of many of the audience. Their diction was clear, and

Euan can look back with pride at his first performance with FDS. Well done. I hope that during the performances, the seagull never left his wire!!

There were many other minor principals who left their mark on the show, and helped to keep the show flowing. They were the Singing Townsfolk - Rose Seller (Mim Wells), Strawberry Seller (Sasha Dobner), Milkmaid (Becky Smith), Knife Grinder (Jack Porter), and the Singing Sailors (Esme Cottier, Abbie Fidler, Frazer Murphy-Hand).

The Pirate Crew and Townsfolk - There were 64 children/teenagers who made up the chorus, and they were excellent. The pirates all inter-reacted with each other where possible, and everyone entered into the spirit of the production. This was no mean feat, especially as many of the cast were only situated a matter of a meter away from the audience - having the production "in the round" as it were. The discipline all round was first class - I'm sure a lot of grey hair had accumulated by some people, especially during rehearsals! Nick Coard is to be congratulated on writing such a story, to be performed and enjoyed by so many people.

Director (Nick Coard) and Co-Director (Claire Forty) - great ingenuity had been shown to perform this show in the way that it was - ie using the stage and the extended cat-walk, with the staging at the other end, as the island. It worked a treat, and as mentioned earlier, the children showed no worries at performing so close to their audience - and after all, many were their families or friends - they were not put off, or seemed at all nervous by the experience. Everyone was there to enjoy themselves - and this they certainly did. Congratulations to you both. I understand that Claire is now leaving the area, I wish you joy in your new surroundings - at least you can leave Faringdon on a high!

Choreography (Lauren Anderson - Chorus; Paula Read - Principals) - Both ladies put a lot of effort and planning into their routines, and they were well-executed by all concerned.

Chorus Singing (Lesley Phillips) - It was good to see the children sing with so much enthusiasm, and it was obvious that they had been well taught, and had learned such a variety of songs, which I'm sure they will remember for quite some time. Well done.

Set Design (Jo Webster) - this was left in very capable hands - and the end result was first rate. I very much liked the design and construction of the Palm Tree. The Set Constructors had done a fine job.

Costumes (Claire Forty, Joan Lee, Jeni Summerfield) - the Society are fortunate to have such talented people to call upon - and the experience required. They all looked colourful, well-fitting, and clean.

Sound (Gary Bates, Rob Griffin) - the sound effects at the start of the show were excellent, and it gave the show a certain atmosphere, right from the start.

Lighting (Ian Chandler, Rob Griffin) - well thought-out, and effective

Back-Stage Co-ordinators (Paula Read, Duncan Sinclair) - one of the hardest tasks in the show - keeping 64 children quiet - how did you do it??? They were a credit to you - there was no noise in the wings at all, when they were waiting for their entrances or exits. Congratulations to you and the cast I'm sure the Back-Stage Crew (Tim Evans, Nick Evans, Alan Merrick) also played their part.

Front of House Co-ordinator (Denise Monk) - everything seemed to run smoothly on Saturday evening - all Front of House Staff were dressed for the occasion, or wore their Society T-Shirts. I hope that both raffles boosted Society funds.

Programme (no mention of co-ordinator) - I was impressed with the detail it contained, especially about the information regarding pirates, and especially Blackbeard. Quality of paper used was good, and the principal photographs were clear. However, with such small print used

in the majority of the programme, it was very difficult to read, in subdued light – one had to wait until one got home to read it properly.

Props (Claire Forty) – we had a good selection, and they were used to good effect

Make-up (Lynne Rodgers, Nona Lewis, Lee Jackson) – they were kept quite busy, and the major characters had been well thought-out

Band – the eight piece band were great, well-balanced, they played a variety of music from different shows, but they were sensitive to those singers who were distanced a considerable way away from the band. I expected a greater gap of sound between singer and music – but this was not the case. Well done to everyone.

The show ended with the principals and chorus singing “Anything Can Happen, if You Let It” – we, the audience could respond by saying it did happen – The Curse of The Black Pig – and we thoroughly enjoyed our evening’s entertainment.

Your Society continues to entertain the people of Faringdon – and long may it continue.

Gareth Jeremy (London, Region 12)