

Oxfordshire Drama Network

ODN Review

FARINGDON DRAMATIC SOCIETY - BEAUTY AND THE BEAST Although the basic story line followed the original, this was a different take in that there were some Nursery Rhyme characters within the main script and we had guest appearances of various other nursery rhyme characters and also Harry Potter, the Famous Five (minus Number 5 - the Dog), Peter Pan etc all in authentic costumes. The Teller of Tales featured throughout with narrative of the story - and she also had her own magic powers. This character, played by Karen Whiffen, carried the story along and ably engaged the audience whenever the opportunity arose.

The opening number was quiet and slow before developing into a more robust and lively song. The costumes of the impoverished Mr Merchant (Alan Taylor) and his six children were good, as were those of the other main characters. The setting being in the local town, with local references, pleased the audience.

Mr Merchant, his daughter Belle (Beauty) played by Lauren Bates, and his other children find themselves in the Beast's garden along with the other Nursery Rhyme characters, all of which had been sent there by the Bad Fairy Taletwister (Katie Dyer) and her evil magic. Katie gave an excellent evil performance throughout, working hard to engage the audience. The Merchant family horse, Dobbin the tap-dancing horse, (Joan Lee and Debbie Lock) was a delight every time he appeared, and his tap dancing routines were great. Well done.

Belle and the kindly Beast (Adrian Wells) worked well together, and he invoked sympathy from the audience for his character's plight.

The entrances and cues were slow at times and this unfortunately slowed the pace down, but this being the first night no doubt improved. We would have liked to see more eye contact and body language between characters and others whilst on stage, even though they may not have been particularly involved in the dialogue at the time. Also more reaction to events from everyone, including the large chorus and dancers. This was a large cast show, and the stage area was well covered by the actors and chorus. The dancing routines were good, especially the solo dancer (Jenny Whiffen).

The large orchestra led the dancing and singing well. The lighting and stage setting were satisfactory for the show, and in particular the horse-drawn sleigh was impressive.

Overall the reaction of the capacity audience showed that they had enjoyed the evening