

How Clarence Earned His Wings

A pantomime by our own Nick Coard

30th/31st Jan & 6th/ 7th Feb
at Faringdon Community College
Director: Nick Coard

Show enthralled their audience

WITH THEIR latest production, the pantomime *How Clarence Earned His Wings*, staged in the Community College, Faringdon Dramatic Society scored a winner. The show was a joy to the eyes and ears, and above all provided real family entertainment.

The society is indeed fortunate to have Nick Coard as a member. Not only did he write the script, but he directed it and played a small part. Even with a co-director (Claire Forty), managing a cast of over sixty is an enormous undertaking, but the result was a great success. They also have a professional musician, Alexei Knupffer, as Musical Director. His scintillating piano playing accompanied by an 8-piece band made an enormous contribution. Their exciting overture got the evening off to a good start. The curtains swept back to reveal the vast opening chorus, including many children. All were well positioned and knew exactly what they were supposed to be doing. The total effect was very striking.

We then meet Clarence (Cleve Forty) - the angel who has not yet earned his wings. Try as he may to "do good", everything he touches seems to go wrong. Thereafter the story moves to the busy town of Faringdon Falls in the "wild west" of Oxfordshire, with its Sheriff, Reverend, cowboys, cowgirls, and Indians. Not your usual panto setting, but the equivalents of the Dame, The Principal Boy, and the

Rebecca Lock (Principal Boy) and Lauren Anderson were a well-matched pair who gave us a delightful rendering of *Surrey with the Fringe on Top*. There were other effective double acts - Sarah Varnom (Dame) and Gary Bates (Villain) with their memorable *Things we used to do*, and Paul Mountford-Lister and Lesley Phillips as two gormless Baddies, the Barracuda brothers. Lesley was particularly lively and amusing as the smaller of the pair. It is a safe bet that the youngsters playing the *Strolling Minstrels* (Gosh Osment and Billie Williams) will be playing important roles in future Faringdon pantos.

There were too many others to mention individually - suffice to say that without exception they "gave their all" and made the most of their characters. Let's not forget the many others who contributed - the wardrobe people, set constructors, choreographers and so on, who added much to the show.

There were some weak points but few. The overture and Clarence's scene-setting opening speech were both a bit long to hold the attention of some of the younger members of the audience, and perhaps we could have done with a touch more glitz and glamour at the close.

review by Jeannett Grace

various goodies and baddies were all easily distinguished.

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