



Be inspired by amateur theatre

Society : Faringdon Dramatic Society
Production : Dick Whittington
Date : 2nd February 2018
Venue : Faringdon Junior School
Report by : Rob Bertwistle

Show Report

Can it really be that time of year again? Oh no it can't – oh yes it can!! Indeed, here I am back to see the seasonal panto production from Faringdon Dramatic Society (FDS) and thanks to Gary Field your Chairman for the kind invitation!

It is always a pleasure to visit FDS and see how much dedication and commitment goes into each production.

Principals:

This was very much an ensemble piece although the principal characters gave some good performances.

Jack Metcalf made a chirpy Dick Whittington with some good facial expressions and clear diction. He used the playing area to good effect and really got into the spirit of the part. However, I did feel the hands on hips stance was slightly over-done!

I liked Lauren Elvidge-Tappenden as Calico the cat. She was very convincing and her cat-like movements were very realistic. I believe the other Calico, Skye Farquhar who was supposed to be performing on this occasion was indisposed. I'm sure she was also a very convincing Calico.

Adrian Wells gave a spirited performance as Alderman Fitzwarren. He used the stage to good effect and his diction and projection were very good.

Millie Long had fun as Alice Fitzwarren. She really made the character come to life and her interactions with other cast members were good. Millie's diction was always clear and she used the stage to good effect.

Katie Dyet made a very 'booable' villainess as Phobia Fitzwarren. Katie really played this part with mischievous glee. Some wonderful facial expressions and clear diction made for a well-rounded performance.

Joan Lee was a delight as the fairly incompetent and dotty cook with the wonderful name Tapioca Dripping. She gave us a funny characterisation with shades, I have to say, of Mrs. Slocombe in 'Are You Being Served?' Whether this was intentional or not it made for a very amusing performance.

Duncan Sinclair and Fiona Merrick made a very amusing team as the sea-faring duo Captain Cockleshell and the ships mate Salty Swab. There was good comic timing between them and lots of

over-acting and eye rolling made for some amusing moments. Don't let the voice drop Fiona as sometimes I struggled to hear all your dialogue. Well done to both of you.

Snitch the Chief rat was played very well by Verity Roberts. She really got into the part and had some wonderful 'ratty' movements and great facial expressions – a very entertaining performance helped I'm sure by the very impressive make-up design.

Giving 'Snitch' excellent support were Izzie Dawson, Kia Howard, Alfie Long, Dexter Kent, Henry Marlow, Byron Pound and Daniel Watson as the 'rat pack'. You all worked well as a team and looked splendid in your fantastic costumes!

Lauren's 'Calico' was like-wise given solid support by the members of the 'cat pack' – Alicia Howard, Tiffany Jakovljevevich, Lynne Puddifoot, Willow Tate, Romilly Tinson and Samantha Viner who all gave strong performances, worked well as a team and achieved some very convincing cat-like movements and attributes. You all looked amazing in your feline costumes and make-up. Well done!

Helen Thrower was very funny (and almost stole the show) as the pirate chief, Blackberry. She had a great time in this role which was very evident with good interactions with the cast and the audience. The make-up and gruff voice were also impressive! Well done!

Josh Dunn was convincing as Boho, the King of Barbary while Poppy Mawdsley had fun in the part of Princess Poppy. Your diction and projection were good also and you worked well as a team.

Ensemble:

The remaining ensemble members all played their various parts well and reacted appropriately to the 'goings-on' on stage. The exiting from the pirate ship was very funny as each person stooped to mimic going downstairs – hilarious! You also all knew your lines and songs so well done to you all!

Director:

Peter Webster who also wrote the panto directed with an eye for making sure everyone had their 'moment'. There were some lovely moments and the children especially must have had a great time in their various roles. Entrances and exits were made quickly and smoothly and the minimal staging made for quick and seamless scene changes. The pace did seem to falter on occasions and I felt that some traditional panto elements were not always brought strongly enough to the fore. For example the audience interaction with the characters was quite minimal and this might have brought more 'fizz' to the production but well done on writing and directing – both enormous tasks!

Musical Director:

Musical Directors Verity Roberts and Helen Thrower (both incidentally in principal parts) ensured everyone knew their words and the singing was clear and was never over-shadowed by the excellent, four piece band led by Fiona Williams on piano.

Choreography:

Verity and Helen were also tasked with providing the choreography but were also being joined by Debbie Lock. The choreography was simple but effective and well with everyone's 'comfort zone'. I particularly liked the cats and rats movements and dance sequences.

Stage management:

Baz Da Sylva in charge of stage management ensured there were no (noticeable) hitches in the smooth running of the production.

Lighting and Sound:

The lighting and sound department in the capable hands of Gary Bates, Ian Chandler and Steve Greening perfectly complimented the action and enhanced many of the scenes. The sound reproduction was very good and all the sound equipment worked well.

Make-up:

The make up by Jessica Biggs, Anna Marlow and Lynn Waugh was excellent. The stand-out instances of amazing make-up were the animal faces and how realistic they looked. Painting (for want of a better expression) the rats' teeth on the actors' lips was a touch of genius! Well done!

Set Design:

This was a relatively simple set design with minor additions and modifications to accommodate particular scenes. I thought the 'flames' in the lanterns hanging at both sides of the stage looked very realistic. The scene aboard the Unicorn was very convincingly staged.

Props:

There were quite a number of props assembled by the capable hands of Carole Tappenden and Jo Webster. The ingredients packets for the obligatory recipe gone wrong scene looked particularly effective. The cast all used the props well.

Costumes:

The costumes designed and created by Lynda Bates, Jeni Summerfield, Joan Lee and Tamsen Mellor-Gardener all looked very crisp and colourful and in keeping with the style and period of the piece. The animal costumes for the rats and cats were particularly effective. I also liked the 'dame' costume very much.

Programme:

The programme was informative and contained all the relevant information with the usual cast biographies and snippets of production news.

Front of House:

My usual warm welcome was noted and I feel like I'm visiting old friends now when I see you all.

In conclusion I would like to thank everyone involved for a most enjoyable evening and I note from the front cover of the programme that it is Faringdon Dramatic Society's 70th anniversary year. Perhaps a potted history of the society or your anniversary celebrations could be sent to your NODA e-magazine *Curtain Up!* which could help to raise the group's profile and to publicise its activities to a wider audience. I know the editor Rosemary Roberts would welcome some news from the further flung reaches of the London Region. There is a link to *Curtain Up!* below.

With best wishes,

Rob

Rob Bertwistle

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District 12

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