



Society : Faringdon Dramatic Society
 Production : THE PIED PIPER – A Pantomime by Peter Webster
 Date : Saturday 7 February 1998
 Venue : Faringdon Community Theatre
 Report by : GarethJeremy – Region 12 N.O.D.A. Rep

Report

I was pleased to be able to attend 'The World Premier' pantomime by Peter Webster. It contained all the ingredients required of a pantomime - good family fun with plenty of audience participation, and in this case many 'in-jokes' to the Faringdon Community. The very large cast were enthusiastic to entertain their audience – this they achieved.

On with some details of the show

SET

This was designed by Jo Webster – the backcloth was interestingly painted, with some excellent portraits on the wall. It would have looked a lot neater if the backcloth had been 'rolled up' on a roller rather than just lifted – it looked a little untidy. I very much liked the 'Rats' Lair.

Set construction/decorations and stage management are an enormous task, which are sometimes overlooked – Congratulations are in order for the team of Peter & Jo Webster, Carole Tappenden, Andrew Logan, Walther Schoonenberg and Ieuan Thomas for their input in setting and managing the scenes.

Likewise the lighting of the set was well presented by Alan Taylor, Dave Campbell and Roger Leitch.

Costumes for the Principals made by Joan Lee, Jeni Summerfield and Sharon Gerry looked good, were colourful and suited the characters.

The parents had worked hard to 'kit out' so many children, but I'm sure they had enjoyed doing their 'bit' for the show.

MAKE-UP

Co-ordinator Karen Whiffen must have gone spare at times with so many in the cast! I liked the four principal Rats – they looked very effective from the front.

PROPS

Rob Westcott and Debra Keasal were responsible for this unenviable task. All the props seemed in order.

N.B. Many people work backstage and front of house (some people are never seen), but nevertheless the show could not take place without them. So congratulations to everyone involved in giving their support, including Prompt, Rehearsal Pianist, Publicity & Ticket Sales, Front of House, Refreshments and House Photographs. Could I point out that the quality of the Front of House photographs were not very clear – perhaps if they were taken in colour and then 'reproduced' in Black & White the reproduction would be much clearer.

It was good to see the Front of House staff all dressed in their impressive sweatshirts with the Pied Piper on them, as per programme. I can't say I was as impressed with the seating arrangements. It took some time to find a seat for me. I am personally in favour of a numbered seating plan. I like an outside isle seat – so I can write some notes during the performance. This is not easy if you are in the middle of a row, with the seats close together.

It would also have been nice to have been able to speak to someone, (Front of House) during the interval, to have got some information about the show, any difficulties you had encountered, some details about how Peter Webster had come to write your pantomime, what is his background? etc. etc. It may be worthwhile to read the article in the last London edition of N.O.D.A. on 'What should be done to welcome your N.O.D.A. Rep.?'

MUSICAL DIRECTOR

Debra Warner, drummer Jim Horton and keyboard player Alison Harte did a good job in the pit. I would like to have seen a little more light and shade and sympathetic playing of the drums on some occasions. Everything written was not 'FORTE'!

MAIN PRINCIPAL CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

The Pied Piper – **Lee Thompson** looked the part. Very expressive with his hands, clear diction – gave a good impression that he was playing the flute with his fingers but more work needed to have been done with the lips. He certainly got the audience involved – very much into the character of the part. Well done.

The Rats – **Ratsbane** – **Chris Matic**, **Ratafia** – **Debbie Lock**, **Ratatouille** – **Kate Lord** and **Ratatat** – **Hannah Logan** all worked well as a team. Good diction and they kept the pace of the show flowing. They all got into their characters and seemed to be enjoying playing the parts. They certainly got the audience going. I was impressed with their 'street wise' characteristics.

Bruiser – **Naomi Bullock** – Looked good, excellent make-up and very expressive. Good use of facial expression and very athletical. Good use of mime. For the finale I would have liked to have seen a different bow worn. An excellent character part, well executed.

Congratulations.

Mayor – **Tim Reeves** – Well cast, seemed in complete control, despite having no idea ideas of his own! Good diction.

Lydia – **Laura Thompson** – Looked sweet, sang nicely and her diction was clear. I would liked to have seen more of a smile in the final scene.

Betty – **Barry Willet** – 'Taylor made' for the part and certainly gave the impression that he enjoyed every minute of the character. Certainly had his Fan Club in on Saturday night – was in complete control and a good foil for the Mayor. He did a good compare job of 'Underneath the Spreading Chestnut Tree'.

Roland – **Christina Willett** – Good characterisation and she smiled. It was so nice to see. Good diction and sang well. Again I would liked to have seen a change of costume for the final scene. Well done.

Talk – **Jo Webster & Mutter** – **Carole Tappenden** – The ideal foil for each other. They worked well as a team. Good control of everything they did. I enjoyed their performance, well done.

Herald – **Claire Green** – Looked the part but there were times when I could not make out what was said. Tended to rush her lines which were not always audible to the audience. Take plenty of time over the deliverance of the dialogue.

Sir Arthur Mow – **Karen Whiffen** – Played the part quite well but I would have liked to have seen more dignity from a person who had been knighted. At times it seemed as if some of her friends were in the audience and she felt a little embarrassed to be seen dressed in a suit of armour!

Nick Oursteeds – **Tom Woolman** – Well done for someone so young. Showed excellent 'stage presence' and was a first class 'Spiv'. Seemed to enjoy the part and certainly got into his character.

Mystic Maggie – Lois Wells (Mrs. Thatcher) – Again good characterisation, excellent diction and good delivery. Made the most of the part.

Adult Citizens, Street Traders, Birds, Rats, Young Citizens, The Spice Girls – all 38 of them played their part in making this a family show. In some of the chorus numbers I would have liked to have seen more **SMILES** – e.g. ‘A Wonderful Day Like Today’ – it didn’t seem like it from many of the facial expressions!

CHOREOGRAPHY

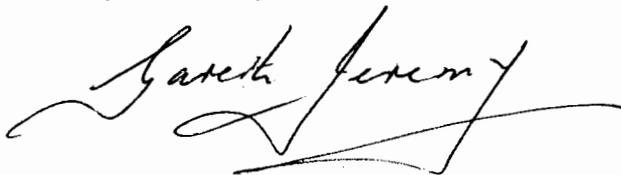
With such a large cast Debbie Lock and Carolyn Taylor had kept it simple but practical, on such a small stage.

THE PRODUCTION

Director Sarah Varnom and her assistant Karen Whiffen had kept to the true tradition of pantomime – it had that magic ingredient of good, clean, family fun, with plenty of audience participation with cast up and down the auditorium isles. The Directors had been clever enough to milk every ounce of fun from the script – plus many ‘in-jokes’ to Faringdon. The whole cast were enthusiastic and ‘alive’ for all to see, especially in the final numbers of the show.

The audience reflected their appreciation for the efforts made by the very large cast on a small stage by the enthusiasm of their applause.

Good Luck to you with your future productions

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gareth Jeremy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Gareth Jeremy
N.O.D.A. Rep Region 12