

NORTH ESSEX THEATRE GUILD
SHOWCASE FESTIVAL 2016-2017

Group: Wickham Bishops Drama Group

Production: Babes in the Wood

Venue: Wickham Bishops Village Hall

Date: 6th January 2017

Director: Graham Pipe

Introduction

With pantomime season under way the group has taken on the challenge of a script written by the director making his directing debut with the group. Co-ordinating all the elements of such a large scale production could be daunting at any time and it will be interesting to see how the group manages this. The story of this script blends the Lost Babes with the Robin Hood legend providing many opportunities for major and minor roles.

Front of House

Friends and Members of the Club

We were given a friendly welcome and some well positioned seats so we had a very clear view of the stage. It was nice to meet the chairman of the group before the performance and we were well looked after for refreshments. Thank you for your consideration and hospitality.

Box Office

Sue Matten, Ken Matten

The performance was well attended and the hall has a generous capacity so the group clearly enjoys good support from the local audience.

Press and Promotion

Roger Lyons, James Milne, Moira Mont

Programme Design/Layout

Roger Lyons

Promotional Images Photography

James Milne

This team had obviously been very successful in their efforts to entice an audience into attending. The programme was a good combination of information about the group, information about the show, some historical information and a couple of puzzles to keep our minds busy. We thought the 'Do You Remember?' section was a great idea

The layout was clear and colourful allowing easy access to relevant sections. The front cover with its bright greens and Robin Hood poster

which was also displayed on the way into the hall gave us a taste of what was to come.

Choreographer

Pauline Roast

This was a successful area of the production. Dance moves had been cleverly adapted for the different characters and groups within the script. A real highlight was the dance between Jingles and Codpiece to 'Bad' - it was very funny, the audience loved it!

The woodland scene where the chorus in their green dresses was very pretty with their graceful movements. Pauline also managed the larger groups well, when the space was more limited the movements became simpler and more easily repeated. The sword fight in the forest looked good and really used the space well. We also sensed Pauline's eye in helping to create 'pictures' and groupings on stage.

Musical Director and Piano

James Tovey

Some well chosen popular songs added an air of liveliness to the production and like the choreography seem to have been selected with the performers in mind. 'Bat out of Hell' was an inspired choice for the Sheriff and 'I Would Walk' and 'Stand and Deliver' provided a light comic touch too. Adapting the tempo of some numbers to fit in with the choreography worked well and allowed performers to give their songs plenty of energy. A reprise of songs was used to cover the scene changes which was very helpful, although there was one change where there was no music (?). The one song we felt was not successful was 'Clarence The Wonder Horse', the chorus was fine and it may have been better to focus on that as the audience participation rather than the verse. All the cast sang confidently reflecting thorough rehearsal and James's guidance. Congratulations.

Musicians

Keyboard 2

James Harragan

Guitar

James Stirling

Bass

John Jevons

Drums

Colin Turner

A real treat to have a group of musicians supporting the show with timely interventions (especially from the drums) when the punch-lines were delivered.

Sound and Lighting Director
assisted by

Robert Brown
Ken Matten

I'd like to deal with these two areas separately.

Sound- There were some issues with the sound system which had an unfortunate impact on the performance. The floor mikes meant that voices came and went as the actors moved around the stage and the sound of their exits and entrances were highlighted especially their footsteps. This was a particular problem during the scenes where the chorus were involved. The situation of the mikes also pushed the acting area back and it felt as though a lot of the stage space towards the front didn't get used to the full (problems with feedback?). At times there also needed to be a better balance between the level of sound from the singers and the band. Sound effects such as the horses arriving, the door knocking and birdsong were accurately delivered and added to the performance.

Lighting - This was a successful area with bright, warm lighting for the village scenes contrasted well with the spookier lighting for the inside of the castle, its colder and harsher tones reflecting the personality of its owner. The best effects came with the woodland scene with its soft tones blending with the use of graphics to give a truly magical atmosphere. The design was well thought through and well executed.

Graphics and Scenery Design
assisted by Len Howard, Alan Roast, Ashley Saunders

Jane Smith

The art work on the sets worked well, we enjoyed the 'jokes' that added visual impact including the shop signs and the signpost. The 'Goose Fayre' notice gave us a clear setting for the story too. When the scene changed to the Sheriff's castle there was plenty of detail to amuse such as the portraits and the fireplace. The stonework was echoed in the lighting effect and again when the action moved to the forest the beautiful backdrop was complemented by the foliage lighting effect, very lovely.

Stage Manager
assisted by Friends and Members of the club

James Bacon

This team were clearly well rehearsed and changes were managed efficiently. We were barely aware of them implementing the changes (in fact in the first half they were invisible) apart from once where for some reason there was no music to cover the scene change. The one thing that

didn't quite come off was the 'pipe' in the kitchen scene a great idea, but needs more work.

Prompt

Ann Hewitt

A reassuring presence for the cast that was not needed during the performance that we saw.

Props

James Bacon, Sue Matten

Some imaginative props were made for the production. The small, wooden fire and log for the forest scene were appropriate embellishments while the cooking paraphernalia for the slapstick scene was fun. Good choices.

Wardrobe Mistress

Jenny Higgins

assisted by Ruth Johnson, Nicola Thomas, Sheila Warner, Judith Wilson

Make Up

Judith Wilson

This team deserve the highest praise for their efforts. The costumes looked fabulous and were beautifully made with impressive attention to period detail.

The dame's costumes were bright and gaudy with stripes, spots, highly decorated shoes and complementary accessories such as aprons, caps, wig and make up. All of this gave more than a hint of 'Dame Edna Everage' which the audience loved.

Jingles had a real suit of motley with regal emblems and plenty of bells! As a nice contrast Sergeant Codpiece's military appearance was emphasised with helmet, chainmail and tunic with light-catching ribbon. Friar Tuck's habit looked authentic and plenty of padding gave him a very distinctive shape. Again the details of rope belt, sandals and wooden cross worn as a necklace made the costume totally believable.

The Sheriff's costume was particularly impressive with flamboyant sleeves and matching hat it looked expensive and set him apart from the 'commoners.'

A nice touch was to have Tommy and Jane's appearance echo Maid Marion and Robin Hood's outfits with tunics, tights, bodices, boots and undershirts. Robin's distinctive green hat was helpful and both Robin and Little John looked nicely smarter than Much and Too Much whose slightly scruffier appearance was wholly appropriate.

The chorus and the junior chorus were well catered for with their village costumes, chef's outfits and the woodland costumes were very effective.

Their diaphanous dresses were delicately embellished with sparkle giving them a truly magical appearance.

Then there are the two animal costumes - a very alert looking horse and very furry bear - both great examples of pantomime costumes at their best.

Apart from making all the costumes the team had to co-ordinate all the backstage arrangements including the many changes for a big cast. Brilliantly done.

Junior Workshop Leader

Michelle Bacon

Michelle should be very proud of the standard of performance achieved by the Junior Workshop members. They were confident and in good voice throughout, they had been very well rehearsed and their enthusiasm shone through.

Licensed Chaperones Michelle Bacon, Sue Matten, Graham Pipe
First Aiders Michelle Bacon, James Milne, Catherine Stott, Jack Williams

It is clear that these group members were providing a supportive network behind the scenes.

CAST

Nurse Golightly

Charlie Willett

Charlie looked terrific with his bright costumes and equally bright hair and make-up! As the first major character we meet in the show we needed a big impact and real engagement with the audience from the start. Vocally, a high pitched rather squeaky voice was adopted and actually it sounded strained and painful. It also seemed to inhibit the ability to sustain the lines which in turn slowed the pace. Charlie also seemed to be a long way off from the audience which made it hard to really spark the kind of interaction we would expect. We felt he would have benefited from more work on his body language to be more expansive in his gestures. He did achieve this a bit more later in the show. He managed his many costume changes well and the little bit of flirtation with the audience did work.

Jingles

Jack Williams

This was a wonderfully vibrant characterisation with Jack quickly warming up the audience to his cry of 'Hey Nonny Nonny'. Confident body language and clear delivery of lines he responded well to the other characters and the audience varying his pitch and tone accordingly. At one point he worked supportively to help other performers to facilitate an awkward exit. He worked particularly well with Codpiece and they made a good comic pair.

Jack had some great (and noisy) costumes which helped to herald his entrances. He has a warm stage presence which proved invaluable and helped to lift the pace of the production. A strong performance.

Sergeant Codpiece

Sam Knott

What a delightfully belligerent characterisation Sam gave us of Codpiece. A small cog given a small amount of authority and determined to use it was the key. Sam showed this in his military posture and loud, commanding voice. What made him especially funny was the way every line of his was delivered like a military order. His dance with Jingles was a memorable moment as his military demeanour gave way to the disco beat. Great fun.

Maid Marion

Catherine Stott

Catherine looked very pretty and has a lovely clear voice. She provided a confident performance and reacted to the other characters well. Sadly, we felt this character really didn't have much to do and we would like to have seen more involvement of someone who is clearly capable of more.

Robin Hood

Laura Kittle

As the title character Laura gave us a very warm, likeable hero. Her body language and expressive voice helped her characterisation. She also has a good singing voice and a lovely smile. Laura's best scenes were with Little John where she seemed more confident, her slightly reserved manner could have been used to good effect when trying to be more romantic with Maid Marian, a slightly shy hero could have added some comedy. There was the potential to develop this role.

Tommy

Jenson Bacon

As Tommy, Jenson deserves a special mention. He gave such a confident performance, vocally clear and strong with a lovely singing voice too. His performance of 'Where is Love?' and his protective body language of Jane was very moving. He is clearly a talent to watch.

Jane

Caitlin O'Sullivan

Caitlin looked very charming as Jane but sadly only had a few lines which she delivered clearly. We felt there was the potential for her role to be developed to be able to see the best of her abilities.

Friar Tuck

Roger Lyons

We really enjoyed this portrayal of Friar Tuck and were impressed by Roger's ability to cope with his costume. The large padding required a wholly different physicality which Roger did well. A drunken Friar Tuck was an image that will stay with us! He has a good sense of comic timing and we looked forward to his appearances in the show. Nicely done.

The Sheriff of Nottingham

Steve Barham

Steve gave us a suitably villainous demeanour with a good line in wicked laughs. Vocally he used a variety of pitch and tone especially when 'money' was mentioned. He also gave us a very spirited delivery of 'Bat Out of Hell' sung cuddling the candlestick in the slower moments. Sadly we lost some of the words to this due to the volume of the music. This was a strong and confident performance which quickly engaged the audience. Well done.

**Too Much
Much**Paul Galbraith
James Milne

I hope Paul and James won't mind being spoken about together but I feel it is the best way to reflect the impact of their performance. There was a nice brotherly relationship between these two characters. Paul's nicely vacant expression and manner made him very endearing with his restrained body language and bewildered air. As the 'younger' of the pair he was popular with the younger members of the audience.

James has a good, clear voice and took on the role of the 'older but not much smarter brother' well. They both did well in the musical numbers too especially 'Stand and Deliver'. Really good comic timing and interaction made this a strong partnership. Very entertaining.

Little John

Moira Munti

Moira has a very confident stage presence, her strong, assertive body language helped to define her as a 'hero'. Vocally clear she worked well with Robin Hood and established their friendship for the audience. Her scenes with Robin, Much and Too Much were fun with exchanges of banter and she was a supportive presence in the musical numbers. Based on what we saw she clearly has the potential to play the leading principal boy. A lovely performance.

Clarence the Wonder Horse

Tommy Pipe, Jonathan Pipe

Tommy and Jonathan should be complimented for their handling of this role. They coped really well with the physical demands of moving around the hall and into the audience as well as their antics on the stage. The costume looked good and the 'face' had a really mischievous expression! a great hit with the audience.

Traveller

Linda Burgess

Looking suitably travel-weary Linda's body language showed us the journey she had made was long.

King Richard

Ashley Saunders

A small but important cameo, Ashley looked quite regal and delivered his lines clearly.

The Bear

Tommy Pipe

As with Clarence, Tommy did well in this role, growling appropriately and responding to the 'he's behind you' audience participation.

Chorus Linda Burgess, Zoe Duddell, Shirley Hunter, Natasha Newman

Although small in number these adult chorus members provided a solid core for the chorus. There was mutual support between them and the junior chorus which worked well and allowed the younger members of

the group to really showcase their talent. Musically they got the show off to a lively start and were a supportive presence throughout.

Junior Workshop Jenson Bacon, Charlotte Beavis, Joe Cole, Sophie Cole, William Colnbrooke, Jasmine Galbraith, Rocc Madden, Saski Madden, Cameron McTaggart, Mae McTaggart, Caitlin O'Sullivan, Tommy Pipe, Lola Webb, Claudia Wheeler

These performers were particularly impressive. Well rehearsed they entered confidently knew exactly where they needed to be and were fully engaged throughout. They sang well and just as importantly smiled giving us the feeling that they really were enjoying themselves. Well done.

Producer (and club chairman)

Michelle Bacon

With such a big production and a director making his debut, having a producer is a really sensible decision. The group has an impressive network of backstage support and the front of house arrangements but it all needs co-ordinating, this all seems to have worked well.

Director and Writer

Graham Pipe

The script certainly had all the traditional elements of a pantomime, the jokes were of the 'Christmas cracker' quality expected, the comedy pairs of characters, heroes and villains and of course a pantomime animal! In the first half of the show the pace was not consistent and with lots of exposition to be dealt with there were slow patches. The pace picked up during the crowd scenes and musical numbers with interesting 'pictures' being created using groups of characters and chorus. When there was dialogue between the characters we were aware of straight lines of performers across the stage, it is worth considering how this could be more varied. A lot of work seems to have been done with the to comedy pairs (Much and Too Much, Jingles and Codpiece), the banter and timing between these characters were good. The ending of the first half looked really good.

The second half did not seem to be as well rehearsed as the first but a better pace was sustained. The storylines moved along well, the finale looked very special and made a rousing ending to the show. There was a warm and appreciative response from the audience.

You were well supported by the combined efforts of group members in all aspects of the show and you achieved some successful performances from the actors. A creditable directing debut.

Thank you for the opportunity to see the show and your hospitality.

Best wishes
Maggi Fisher

accompanied by
Kate Sheffield