

Twass the Night Before Christmas by Ken Ludwig

Wickham Bishops Drama Club

07/01/2022

Directed by Pauline Roast

I thought I had all my Christmas presents but going along to Wickham Bishops Drama Club last night I was given the gift of a super little play which was new to me and a great choice for this group.

Because of Covid, they had this year chosen not to produce a pantomime but had found this little jewel of a play with just five actors playing ten characters. We were greeted warmly by the front of house and with a good choice of opening generic music, the tabs opened up to a colourful and whimsically painted set. Flats either side which swung round to different scenes and the clever use of props all made by Alan Roast and Charlie Willett. This group always excel themselves on their sets and this one was no exception. Lighting and sound were used well

I liked the ease of changing waistcoats and hats to denote the twin mice. Easy for a quick change which I always try to advocate as a director. I really thought that each character had the right costume.

Although this was a small cast, each was strong and excellent in their characters. Clear enunciation of speech, which is always essential, with good sound quality via the use of radio mikes enhanced a first rate cast - who had been directed extremely well by Pauline Roast.

The play opens with Uncle Brierly, played by Graham Pipe, attempting to read the poem 'Twass the night before Christmas' before being interrupted by a very tall, funny mouse, called Amos (Nick Hewes). Visiting Uncle Brierly are the Sneeds - Wendell and Britannia (Charlie Willett and Debbie Irby), also visiting is Uncle Brierly's niece Emily (Catherine Stott) who is a close friend of Amos. Both Emily and Amos have been left off Santa's Nice and Naughty list. But with the help of elf Calliope (Debbie Irby) they fly off to the North Pole to rectify this and save Christmas. There was a lovely plane scene on the thrust, simply done but it gave time for a set change behind the tabs.

Once at the North Pole they meet Sir Guy of Gisborne, (Graham Pipe) and Mulch (Charlie Willett), the superb baddies of the piece. This is where both these actors really shine, they both provided great, over the top characters, with plenty of chances to get the small but perfectly formed audience to start booing. Finally Father Christmas arrives, again played by Charlie Willett, followed by Amos of Kansas (Nick Hewes), Amos's twin brother and great fun ensues, with sword fighting, energetic chases and fun accompanied by the traditional confusion and mix up of characters.

I was so impressed by each of the actors; they all were incredibly strong and interacted really well as a team. The energy and joy exuding from each one, gave the audience such a lovely evening out, it was well worth coming out on such a freezing cold night to see this show. I must admit the strength of acting from each of them really made this show work incredibly well and each should be very proud of their achievements during this Covid time.

My only small criticism is that at the end when the cast were singing the last rap song, they should have done so in front of the tabs so we did not see the backstage crew changing back the set.

I extend my congratulations to you all and look forward to seeing your Spring show.

Christine Davidson - NODA East District 8 Rep