

# **NODA Show Report**

## **Sleeping Beauty**

Performed by Wickham Bishops Drama Club at Wickham Bishops Village Hall

Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2018 (Matinee Performance)

On a damp, dreary January afternoon, a crowd of Brownies, Rainbows, Guides and families gathered with excitement outside the doors of Wickham Bishops Village Hall. Upon entry there was a party atmosphere, with even the entrance hall adorned with decorations for the 'Christening' of the young Princess born to King Cactus and Queen Marigold. The Hall was quickly packed out, and we were treated to the opening number 'Can't Stop the Feeling' with live music and full dance routine. Some early nerves were present as the young ensemble found their rhythm, understandably so in front of the noisy and enthusiastic audience, but with simple and well-rehearsed choreography by Pauline Roast they soon found themselves as the action moved on.

Good Fairy Lilac played by Catherine Scott kept us on the narrative path, assisted by her four young fairies played by Lola Webb, Claudia Wheeler, Mae McTaggart and Saski Madden, who looked perfectly dainty and delicate in beautiful tutus with wands – everything a fairy needs. They moved well as one and the later sleep scene Hush-a-Bye Mountain was beautiful.

Guide for the audience Muddles was played by James Bacon, a very likeable, slightly dreamy simple chap, who got us all in the panto mood with shout-outs. Nurse Dottie Dettol was our Dame, confidently delivered by Graham Pipe. With an air of experience, he flirted comfortably with the audience and was quite happy to put the musicians in their place with a slightly mistimed 'bu-dum ba'. I wouldn't have minded seeing a few more petticoats and over the top painted make-up, but the outrageous hat in the finale pulled out all the stops.

The comedy duo Fetch and Carrie played by Jack Williams and Linda Burgess had an infectious sense of mischief during the quick-fire classroom scene, and the postal exchange scene (one for the adults) showed off their comic timing together well. A couple of the early jokes were delivered a little quickly and missed, but again, the actors found their rhythm.

King and Queen played by Charlie Willet and Moira Monti made a good pairing as the regal couple, with lavish royal costumes and being over-protective parents in light of Bad Witch-Hazel's curse. Jordan Shynn had the enviable role of the evil, conniving witch, who was quite-rightly greeted with a chorus of boo's from the audience at her

every appearance. With huge stage presence and focus, she made the perfect 'baddie', with some of the younger audience shrinking with a cautious grin back in their seats. My young accomplice (my 5 year old son) kept checking it was 'all pretend', yet didn't stop smiling throughout her performance. Kids love being scared. The scene with her minions around the cauldron gave the band an opportunity to change tempo and pace, and the bad witch never missed a beat.

The adult princess Rose was played by Anna Galbraith, and was well matched in ability with her prince's Alexis and Alexander, played by Paul Galbraith. The songs they shared were delivered well, some nerves were showing, but the couple were so endearing and exactly what you would expect from your prince and princess pairing. Again, costumes were lovely, provided by Jenny Higgins and assistants. The lighting provided by Robert Brown and Ken Matten was well thought out, including a bold clock gobo with moving hands in the castle which was very impressive. Numerous projections were used throughout to enhance the carefully painted 2D backdrops, and the set design by Alan Roast was simple and effective to maximise on stage space; I thought the rotating entrances with alternate sets on either side was a well-thought out design.

Quite often a live band will have a tendency to drown out some of the singing, but the volumes were perfectly balanced and accompanied the vocals successfully. Musical Director James Harragan fronted the band with keyboard, and was joined by John Jevons, Colin Turner and James Sterling, who had a perfect sense of comic as well as musical timing. Songs chosen for the production were familiar to most young people, including huge hit 'When I grow up' from the musical Matilda, opened by Caitlin O'Sullivan playing young Princess Rose who was very confident and capable in vocal ability. Also worthy of mention was the Forest of Thorns, with the young male actors Jenson Bacon, Charlie Freeman and Cameron McTaggart making full use of the stage and eerie lighting to demonstrate through physical theatre the twisting, snaring vines choking the castle over the years.

There was some excellent dramatic choreography with Prince Alexander battling through the thorns with his sword. All of the young performers stayed well focused and projected well, under the caring eye of the mature ensemble members, and among them were some gifted performers that I am sure will continue to thrive under the care of their Junior Workshop Leader Michelle Bacon. There was a lovely sense of community spirit onstage between young and mature actors, which is what community theatre should be all about.

The Director James Milne had a lot to oversee for his first panto, but it also really felt as though there was a strong team effort focussing on all aspects of this production. All elements of the show blended together successfully, and complimented each other well,

from sound and lighting to the youngest member of the cast. A bright, cheerful afternoon on a damp, foggy January day.