

## NATIONAL OPERATIC AND DRAMATIC ASSOCIATION LONDON REGION

**Society** ; Twyford and Ruscombe Theatre Group  
**Production** ; **RED RIDING HOOD**  
**Date** ; Friday 16th January 2009  
**Venue** ; Loddon Hall, Twyford  
**Report by** ; Henry Hawes - NODA Representative - Area 13

On Friday 16th January 2009, I was pleased to be invited to review Twyford & Ruscombe Theatre Groups annual pantomime at the Loddon Hall, Twyford. How refreshing in this day and age to see a genuine, traditional pantomime such as presented by this society. It contained all the elements of pantomime from slapstick to comedy, outrageous costumes, a joy of performing and good audience participation, presenting an excellent evenings entertainment. What more could you ask for?

**HELEN LOFTING (The Woodland Fairy)** - All good pantomines have a 'Good Fairy' who the audience can cheer whenever she appears to right the wrongs! Helen made a believable 'Fairy' who moved gracefully and cast her spells beautifully.

**MIKE HIGGINS (Lupus Rex)** - One normally sees Mike as the 'Dame', but on this occassion he took on the role of the 'Baddy' and what a good job he made of it. He was suitably evil and menacing which certainly got the audience to hiss and boo on his every appearance. His costume was excellent and enhanced with effective make-up. Here we had good 'Wolf-like' movements and diction so that every word could be heard - Well done.

**JAMES HIGGINS (Boy Blue)** - James carried off this part very well, being teamed up with 'Boo-Peep' and there was no mistaking his character, being dressed in an eye-catching blue costume. He entered fully into the pantomime spirit but I did feel that you appeared a little stiff on stage, you need to relax a little more and which would have enhanced the character.

**LISANNE STEWART (Boo-Peep)** - Lianne looked most attractive on stage with a dress straight out of the nursery rhyme. Her movements were all in keeping with her character, but with no chance of chasing her sheep in that dress!! Diction was good so that every word could be heard - Well done.

**NEIL TYLER (Sir Jasper de Vyle)** - As the money-grabbing landowner, Neil got the character exactly right, full of bluster and threats but when threatened, revealed his timid nature. This was another character who got the same hiss and boo treatment from the audience. Good movement with superb diction and projection - A great characterisation.

**KIM CASTLE (Hustle)**

**MIKE BROOKS (Bustle)** - In every pantomime it is essential to have a comedy duo, some are good, some are bad, but this duo were excellent. Pace of the dialogue was maintained throughout with superb comedy timing, particularly in the 'slap-stick' scene which was well devised and executed. I hope Kim enjoyed her first forey into pantomime and I hope has not been put off appearing in future Panto's - Congratulations to both of you.

**LAILA HAMMENTS (Belinda Merry aka Red Riding Hood)** - As part of the romantic duo in this show, Laila showed her feelings towards the 'Prince' but also her fear of 'Lupus Rex' with both aspects being maintained throughout. Here we had good facial expressions and diction and a pleasant singing voice which blended well with the 'Prince' - Well done.

**NATALIE FORWARD (Prince Edwin of Entertania)** - As the second half of the romantic duo, I was surprised to read in the programme that this was your first Pantomime, you have obviously been 'hiding your light under a bushel' as your presentation of the thigh slapping, 'Principal Boy' could not have been bettered, true pantomime in all aspects with a good singing voice which blended well - Congratulations.

**KIRK WOOTON (Bobby Shaftoe)** - This is a character you will find in all pantomimes, usually in the guise of 'Buttons' or 'Simple Simon' etc; and Kirk played this role of the 'Village Idiot' superbly. His rapport with the audience was excellent and his movements and facial expressions were a joy to watch. I loved your 'ad-libs' when drying on your words, pure comedy - Congratulations.

**GAVIN ROBINSON (Grandma Merry)** - Every Pantomime requires an outrageous character in the shape of a male dressed as a woman, invariably in a plethora of outlandish, colourful costumes and Gavin's presentation was no exception. This character treads a fine line to achieve the right balance, too far one way and it becomes a grotesque characterisation and too far the other way and it becomes dull and uninspiring but this presentation was spot-on - For your first forey into presenting a Pantomime Dame this was exceptional - Congratulations.

**FIONA LAWRENCE (The Ghost)** - This minor role was well presented by Fiona, appearing on cue as a ghost in a comedy routine.

**CHORUS** - This chorus did very well, singing was well balanced with a good tonal quality and volume. Their movement about the stage area was well controlled and their dancing in the choreographic routines was well presented and what I liked was the fact they entered fully into the spirit of the show - Well done.

**'TWYFORD TAPPERS'** - This 'speciality tap routine' fitted in very well with the

overall performance, although the routine was not difficult it was well danced (or tapped).

**MUSICIANS** - This group of three musicians was an ideal accompaniment for the cast. All the songs were well known and very reminiscent of songs from the Old Time Variety, although I did think that some of the tempo's were a little on the slow side.

**NIGEL AVES (Director)**

**MIKE BROOKS (Producer)** - These two obviously make a good team and **Nigel** had obviously got the best out of his cast with some wonderful characterisations. He had also ensured that all the aspects of pantomime had been incorporated. It contained good slap-stick routines together with good staging and movement, together with a joy of performing which transmitted itself to the audience - Congratulations on a first-class and enjoyable show.

**Choreography** - This aspect had been well devised with simplistic, but effective steps which ensured the performers kept together and made the routines effective.

**Stage Manager & Crew** - This appeared a well managed stage on the night of my visit, with no visible hitches.

**Set Design and Construction** - This was good scenery, well constructed and painted in true pantomime style. I particularly liked the moving branch on the tree which dispensed both fruit and water - Excellent.

**Lighting** - A good lighting plot, well controlled ensuring the various scenes were lit correctly

**Sound** - The sound was good, I sat in Row H and could hear every word without distortion.

**Costumes** - All wonderfully 'over the top', particularly the 'Dames' - All in true pantomime style - Well done.

**Properties** - All the properties used fitted the action on stage - All being suitably outrageous.

**Make-up** - Make-up had been well applied, particularly the 'Dames' and 'Lupus Rex' - Well done.

**Programme** - A neat programme of the right size. It contained all the necessary information with interesting cast biographies and an eye-catching cover, excellent value at 50p.

**Front of House** - This society can always be relied on to present Front of House staff who are smartly dressed and attentive to their audience and this occasion was no exception.

Thank you for inviting me to review your pantomime and congratulations to all concerned who were involved in presenting such an enjoyable show and all success with your next production.

*Henry*

Henry Hawes - NODA Representative - Area 13