

## **Jack and the Beanstalk – Wickham Bishops Drama Club**

Performed 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 2013 at Wickham Bishops Village Hall

Director – Jack Williams, Musical Director – Thomas Duchan

Wickham Bishops Drama Club once again pulls an enjoyable show out of the bag despite the absence of an adult chorus and with just six men in the company, one of those dressed as a woman.

Surprisingly, perhaps, this didn't matter much since some of the male principal roles were played by women in the best of pantomime tradition and the show was none the worse for this. Jack (Laura Kittle) and Billy (Debbie Allen), the two "brothers", made a great comedy duo and Jack's song in the second act was particularly strong. Dora and Dolly (Rebecca Lee and Kim French respectively) were lucky enough to play their own gender and were perhaps the closest to representing the adult chorus. Rebecca certainly had a powerful voice; what Thomas Duchan wouldn't have given for half a dozen more like that! Anne-Marie Latter, glamorous in a blonde wig, as the Fairy Queen, is in danger of being typecast, so good is she in this role while Ian Lodge as Widow Lily White also established a strong character. Steve Barham as Squire Gray perhaps was a little nervous on the opening night; I felt that he needed to let himself go as the evil landlord, with more attack and volume. He certainly looked the part with the magnificent hat and a moustache worthy of an Edwardian melodrama. In fact all the costumes were splendid and especially that of Buttercup the cow. I thought the idea of having Buttercup stand on her hind legs, giving her so much scope to move, use her front hooves and clearly demonstrate she was a cow, was an inspired idea. At first I wondered if this was an economic decision, since having both a front and a rear end of a cow or pantomime horse is traditional. But this role was so well done it must have been an artistic decision. Whoever it was, Georgina Foley-Brickley or Amber Keeling, well done!

The junior cast members did well, particularly in the Mission Impossible scene as mice. This was cleverly done and fun to watch. The first act ballet was lovely and the choreography well-adapted to the different age groups on stage. One constructive comment for the chorus in particular but it applies to everyone – do make sure you know why you are coming on-stage or moving off-stage. This is not just a question of moving because it is your cue to move but moving, in character, with purpose and energy because there is a dramatic reason to do so.

The Cloudland castle scenes were always good since the action was in safe hands with Claire and Linda Burgess as Hugh and Ida Noe and with Maddy Lyman as Princess Mirabel. The set, large props and technical effects always worked well, the sound effects were timely and the lighting varied and

interesting. Having a small band rather than just a keyboard does provide a fuller, richer sound but it was noticeable that the backing tracks used for the junior cast members when dancing was better still. The contrast between the two is significant. While I do understand that the band has to play down to accommodate the relatively small number of singers onstage I wonder whether the company would benefit from some more singing help. Some singing workshops perhaps?

Overall, this was a very entertaining evening and it was good to be part of a very enthusiastic and reasonable-size audience on the opening night. Congratulations to Jack Williams on his directorial debut – a good job well done.

Reviewer – Stewart Adkins

Regional Representative, District 8

NODA East