

## NORTH ESSEX THEATRE GUILD SHOWCASE FESTIVAL 2018-19

Wickham Bishops Drama Club  
“Mother Goose” by Alan P Frayn

Director: Michelle Bacon

Adjudicators: Andrew Hodgson & Sheila Foster

5/1/19

### INTRODUCTION/F.O.H.

“Mother Goose” is one of the most traditional of all pantomimes, and the script selected for this production was excellent, containing all the requisite elements and, most importantly, was very funny!

We received a warm and helpful welcome from the F.O.H team; we were given excellent seats, a tray of coffee and biscuits and all the information we needed. The attractively designed programme was also packed with information and activities. It was good to see the large hall so full for the final performance; the audience buzzed with anticipation waiting for the show to start!

### SETTINGS/PROPS

The well designed scenery was a visual delight; from the pastel coloured, beautifully painted village green, to Mother Goose’s Palace in peach and yellow, to the enchanting woodland glade containing the magic pool, this was children’s story book come to life! The use of cut-outs and projections helped to create a 3D effect to the settings. Well selected furniture, and particularly the excellent range of props, enhanced the production and the story. Scene changes were smoothly and efficiently conducted by the stage crew. Well done to all involved in this aspect of the show!

### LIGHTING & SOUND

The visual presentation of the production was also greatly enhanced by the lighting and effects design. There was perceptive use of colour to create mood and atmosphere and to support the settings and costumes. The “Magic Pool” scene was a particular delight with its realistic looking waterfall. Spots, projections and smoke all combined to create some memorable images. Cues were smoothly executed.

Sound effects were very good, set at an appropriate level and they added to the comic fun. The amplification of the performers (no doubt necessary because of the height of the hall?) was less successful at times, with the Fairy sounding over-amplified at the beginning, but the chorus not audible enough. It is often hard to strike the right balance, but the volume of the musical accompaniment was generally fine.

### COSTUMES

There was a magnificent array of costumes on display. The general tone was “18<sup>th</sup> Century” with various modern touches. Everything was colour co-ordinated, and it was clear that a lot of effort, and thought, had gone into the making and acquisition of all the costumes, with the outfits well-matched to the characters: Mother Goose’s glamorous make-over, the King and Queen’s regal robes, the glamorous Fairy opposite the evilly attired Demon, the Squire’s kilt, the wonderful Goose costume, the

fluffy goslings, and the amusingly co-ordinated outfits of Bill and Ben, we could go on! Very well done to all involved. Hair and make-up was also nicely considered, and enhanced the costumes.

## MUSIC & CHOREOGRAPHY

A live band is always desirable in a pantomime if possible, and this production was fortunate to have M.D. James Harragan and his fellow musicians to accompany the show so sympathetically, and at a good pace. There was a wide range of music to play, and the percussionist did a great job in highlighting various gags and fallings over! Occasionally, scene changes were conducted in silence when some music was required to cover. The principals coped well with the songs they were given, but there were moments when the ensemble needed a little more volume and confidence in their singing.

We understand that thirteen year old Jenson Bacon was the choreographer of the show and he did a great job! There were a lot of numbers which needed different styles of movement; everything looked well-rehearsed and the cast seemed confident in what they had to do. This was quite an undertaking for someone so young and we congratulate Jenson on his splendid work!

## PERFORMANCES

**MOTHER GOOSE:** Graham Pipe is one of the most accomplished Dames locally, and in the title role of this pantomime, he excelled! Warm-hearted and motherly, enhanced by his northern accent, Graham batted off his gags with easy-going panache, working very well with his fellow players. He had a great rapport with the audience, and even though Mother Goose was supposed to become selfish when she came into her fortune, it was impossible to really take against such a delightful Dame! Very well done indeed!

**SQUIRE MCGREEDY:** Ross McTaggart played his Scottish themed “baddie” (he wasn’t really that bad, just a bit mean!) with his tongue in his cheek and an air of relaxed humour! His “romance” with Mother Goose was nicely developed and he made a good pairing with Graham Pipe. The comedy scenes with his blundering side kicks, Bill and Ben, were classic pantomime with good team playing by all three actors. Ross also wore his kilt with panache and played off the audience with clear enjoyment.

**JILL:** Leigh Perry made a no-nonsense, practical, and modern Principal Girl (no simpering village maiden here!). Leigh was nicely paired with James as Colin, and they made an attractive and confident couple. Jill was definitely the voice of common sense in the family, and Leigh showed this well in her well-judged and appropriate performance.

**BILLY:** Nick Hewes was immensely likeable and very endearing as this “silly” Billy! He built up a good rapport with the audience and went about his comic business with a nicely natural sense of fun, without ever over doing things! The “Box of Crockery” routine with Bill and Ben, was very well done by all three performers and was a comic highlight of the show for us!

**COLIN:** James Milne played this role with a natural, and good natured manner: the role itself did not offer him a lot of scope for characterisation but he was nicely paired opposite Leigh, and James made the most of each appearance, moving well onstage. He also possessed a pleasant and confident singing voice.

**BILL BUMPKIN & BEN BOGTROTTER:** This double act was an absolute hoot! James Bacon and Jordan Shynn gave scene-stealing performances as a very well contrasted pair of gormless country bumpkins who did everything wrong to hilarious effect! They had excellent timing and their facial expressions were a treat. They worked very well with each other but also with Ross and Nick in various comedy routines. Very well done indeed both of you!

**DEMON DISCONTENT:** Charlie Willett was suitably evil and looked the part exactly. He maintained “the Panto Baddie of the Year” running gag very amusingly, and presented his glowering persona well in terms of movement, expression and vocal inflection. The touch of comedy at the end was nicely done!

**FAIRY FRIENDSHIP:** Rona Shone literally sparkled on her first entrance, and was a glamorous presence throughout the show. She played opposite the Demon effectively and spoke her rhyming dialogue with clarity and sincerity.

**PRISCILLA:** Although she was encased in her Goose costume, Debbie Irby created a loveable character that the audience really cared about. Her reactions which encompassed a range of emotions were delightful, and her “honk” added to the endearing personality of Priscilla! Her relationship with Mother Goose was a joy! Well done Debbie!

**KING & QUEEN GOOSELAND:** We assumed that Anne-Marie and Stuart Latter were married or related in real life, which added to the warm relationship this royal pair seemed to have. They looked very regal, and presented proper dignity and concern as the loving parents of Priscilla.

**ADULT & JUNIOR CHORUS:** It was great to see a range of ages in the chorus. They were a united group and reacted well to the events going on around them. We were also impressed by their movement which looked confident and well-rehearsed. They also coped well with a range of songs, which needed a little more vocal strength at times but were always pleasant to listen to. Well done everyone!

## PRODUCTION

This was a delightfully traditional, and colourful, community pantomime. The show was a visual treat; well directed by Michelle Bacon, who created some lovely stage pictures and moved her cast effectively around the stage. There were times, in the first half of the performance, when the energy and pace of the production seemed to dip a little. However, the second half zipped along and, generally, the show was very funny (aided by an excellent script). It was well performed by a committed cast, who played off the audience very ably and were clearly having a great time. We, in the audience, certainly did! Best wishes and thank you!

Andrew Hodgson (Adjudicator)

