

NORTH ESSEX THATRE GUILD SHOWCASE FESTIVAL 2019-20

Wickham Bishops Drama Club

Aladdin directed by Sue Matten

Adjudicated by Anne Sexton assisted by Liz Mullen

9/1/20

FRONT OF HOUSE

We received a nice, friendly welcome from the team, the bar was open and pre-show music helped to create a convivial atmosphere for the show ahead. Hot drinks were available during the interval. The programme was of a high standard, attractive in design and full of information.

SETTING/PROPS

The opening scene was imaginative and colourful, and this established the high visual quality of the show from the start. The laundrette, with its huge washing machine and hanging laundry was good. Some bubbles would have added to the humour of the laundry sequence. The palaces used colour to create a luxurious ambience; indeed all the settings were appropriate to the action and added detail and interest to the action. A wide variety of props had been assembled, all in keeping and, again, enhancing to the story of the pantomime. We loved the Dame's entrance on a bicycle which was very funny and the all-important lamps were just right! Well done to all involved!

LIGHTING/SOUND

Fantastic lighting effects were an integral part of the show and really added to the overall effectiveness of the sets. The blue-lit gauze in the cave scene was just one enterprising idea. The psychedelic whirling effect of the cave opening, and the magic spells were superb. The green-mottled gobo effect for the woods, the brightly lit village, the spot on the magic carpet flight, with the stars behind, were all lovely, and backed up by very good sound effects. The skeletal ghosts were not all picked up by the U.V. lighting but generally the technical aspects of the show did the group proud!

COSTUMES

The vast majority of the costumes were colourful, luxurious and really rather splendid! The white tutus of the little jewel bearers, made us catch our breath. The matching outfits of the chorus were sweet and the "royals" were richly garbed, however we thought that the Dame's trouser suit did not help her "femininity". Make-up, and hairstyles, were all well-co-ordinated with the costumes and characters. Well done!

MUSIC

There was a lovely collection of songs and dance music, played by a hard working duo of musicians. The songs were imaginative and varied, with some nice singing from the cast and well-balanced sound levels; a strong part of the production. Some

well-chosen pre-recorded music was used for the dances. The crash of drums was a corny way to mark a pun; a good old panto tradition that works!

CHOREOGRAPHY

With lots of thought, the choreography added some beautiful moments to the show. The ribbon and fan dances were rhythmical and attractive. Well done to the choreographers and the dancers.

CAST

ALADDIN: Leigh Perry made a very good Principal Boy, with the traditional slap on the thigh! Leigh's dialogue was clear, her singing was good, and she was very animated throughout. A confident and convincing portrayal, well done!

PRINCESS YASMIN: Looking very attractive, Catherine Grace fulfilled her role as Principal Girl with a nice, clear voice and a really sweet singing voice. The two lovers made a charming couple and their duet on the magic carpet was a joy!

WIDOW TWANKEY: Although quite young for the role, James Bacon was very amusing with good comic timing. James built up a good rapport with the audience and had good body language and lots of enthusiasm!

WISHEE-WASHEE: As Aladdin's younger brother who was always in trouble, Nick Hewes was lively, mischievous and full of expression. This was a very good interpretation.

ABANAZA: Initially, this character did not seem like a wicked uncle, Ross McTaggart was very laid back and almost friendly! However, once Ross let out that evil laugh, his nastiness was let loose and his villainy was given full rein!

EMPEROR MING: Charlie Willet's Emperor was very regal in his persona, very pompous and full of his own importance! A very convincing ruler!

EMPRESS MING: With a clear, sharp voice and snobbish air, Rona Shone was definitely the power behind the throne! She was animated, attractive and gave a confident portrayal.

SUKI: Debbie Irby made a lovely handmaiden to the Princess. Her advice, usually ignored, was clearly stated with a nice tone of voice. This was a delightful characterisation.

YING/YANG: To the strains of "Ying Ton" etc. Linda Burgess and Sue Walker bundled onto the stage bringing much hilarity with their comic pair playing. There were times when their Chinese accents muffled their dialogue but none-the-less they were very entertaining.

GENIE OF THE LAMP: Paul Matten's bright green genie was very funny, friendly and expressive. He looked as though he was really enjoying this magical role; we certainly did!

SPIRIT OF THE RING: As the other magical figure, Michelle Bacon brought charm and kindness to this delightful character, creating a friendly rapport with the audience.

ABOMINABLE SANDRA: What a surprise to add a Yeti to this pantomime! Without saying a word, Jenny Turnbull became an instant favourite with the audience. This was a very enjoyable cameo role that added so much to the story. Jenny was also very animated in her other role in the production.

WOMEN 1, 2 AND 3: Anne Hewett, Shirley Hunter and Jenny Turnbull were good additions to the production. The three of them were clear voiced and animated throughout.

GIRL: Megan Trigg was very sweet and shy in her role, just needing a little more volume in her line delivery.

GUARDS: Jenson Bacon and Charlie Freeman were impressive guards with resonant voices and good body language.

JUNIOR CHORUS: This group looked great, playing an important role in the show. They moved in unison and showed good teamwork. They needed more volume (and a few more smiles) in their songs.

PRODUCTION

This was a very enjoyable production. It had all the elements needed for a great pantomime. It only needed to increase the pace, with a sharper pick up of verbal cues at times, to make it even more successful. Having said that, the sets, costumes, lighting and music were all excellent. We were highly entertained, and the show was definitely a hit with the small but enthusiastic audience at the performance we attended. Thank you for the invitation.

Best wishes,
Anne Sexton (Adjudicator)