

Society : New Stagers
Production : Treasure Island
Date : 24th January 2015
Venue : St Anne's Church
Report by : Tony Sweeney

Show Report

General

This was an excellent family panto in the traditional style with a strong cast and an audience that totally bought into the concept and entered fully into the spirit of the evening. Hilarious and well worked throughout with some excellent asides that the audience loved. A young boy really got into things and ended up being a real part of the show, even getting up on stage to add a nice touch of audience participation. I also liked the way the cast got the audience playing swaying palm trees and performing animal noises to make it a really fun experience for all.

Players

Catherine Fox-Kirk (Jim Hawkins) as principal boy was perfect for the role, giving us an outstanding performance. She handled both the part and the audience with some ease that worked well throughout.

Keith Barnes (Mrs. Hawkins) has made the part of the dame his own and in my view perfectly encapsulates the peculiarly quirky English theatrical tradition. Funny and with great rapport with the audience he really is an arch exponent of the craft. The outrageous costumes only added to the feel of the character.

Marc Chittock (Captain Smollett) as the ship's captain had just the right degree of authority to make the part work. An excellent costume reinforced the character which was delivered well.

Emma Burley (Bosun Arrows) as the ship's Boson had an excellent West Country accent and really got into the part. A good supporting role which certainly added to the show's impact.

Ailsa Wright (Madame Trelawney) played the part of a haughty aristocrat well. It was an excellent idea to make the squire female as in the book he is perhaps a little dull to work well in panto. A good accent and great body language all helped Ailsa deliver an excellent supporting role.

Sian Ashworth (Doctor Livesey) as the ship's doctor looked scholarly as you would expect and entered into the part with real commitment. Again this was an excellent supporting performance.

Dominic Cross (Captain Long John Saliva) as the villain again kept to the tried and trusted format that has worked so well for so long. The audience booed and hissed from the start. A really startling costume and full beard really added to the archetypal pirate and he played the role to the full.

Becca Stafford (Pirate Spit) as one of the pirate crew was clearly enjoying herself and performed the part of the side-kick well. Some good movement and body language again added to the impact.

Christine Peirson (Pirate Dribble) as a rather incontinent pirate displayed some nice comic touches and worked well with the other three pirates.

Laura Jane Parsons (Pirate Quigley) complete with a look-alike hand puppet again gave us a slightly different characterisation which helped make the pirate band quite engaging.

Director

Paul Johnson wrote, directed and performed in the show and his feel for the medium of panto really shone through. He used both the small stage and the performers at his disposal extremely well, meaning the show flowed from scene to scene with real pace.

Stage Management

Given the size of the stage the management of the space was done with almost clockwork precision. Great use was made of actions in front of the curtains which again helped the action flow almost seamlessly. All in all the movement and actions were well co-ordinated.

Sound

A good clear sound system allowed everyone to hear everything throughout. The songs were delivered well using familiar songs with alternative lyrics to help move the plot on.

Lighting

The lighting was used well to denote day and night and the inside of a cave, giving these scenes additional impact.

Make-Up

The make-up was used well with fake tattoos for the pirates and totally over the top use for the dame. Again it played its part.

Set Design

The set was used well, particularly when moving from scene to scene.

Props

The props were all in place and used well, again adding to the impact.

Costumes

The costumes were iconic, drawing very much on both tradition and stereotypes to underline each character which of course is the key. The dame's OTT dresses worked extremely well, as did the pirate captain's magnificent garb.

Programme

The programme was a basic one which suited the show and its ethos. Including the cast list and something about the history added to the show itself. A timeline showing how it developed was also an interesting and unique addition.

Front of house

The front of house staff not only handled the welcome to the audience with real aplomb, but dressing up as pirates added to their anticipation. Clearly this key role is recognised as important by the group. Given that everyone enjoyed the evening I suspect next year's panto is already in people's calendars.

Tony Sweeney
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