

CINDERELLA : MESSAGES FROM OUR AUDIENCES

NODA Review

Cinderella

Crediton Operatic Dramatic Society

Performed at The Old Town Hall, Crediton

7pm on 22nd December 2023

Directed and choreographed by Holly Harris

The story of Cinderella followed the classic tale of a down-trodden step-daughter treated badly and cruelly by her wicked step-mother but under the nose of her father Baron Harduppe, who eventually is the hero of this particular story.

I am aware that the staging of any production is not a simple one at this location due to the lack of wings and backstage area. The director, Holly Harris, cleverly used the small area near the steps to the stage by curtaining it off for actors to use. With no access from backstage there was only one entrance from the auditorium so planning was essential to allow the pantomime to flow and the curtained area did allow flexibility for the cast.

Entering from the curtained area we meet a beautifully dressed Fairy Godmother in a stunning pink gown, silver wings, tiara, necklace and colour changing wand. Narrating the story this actor, with clear diction and a lovely singing voice began the tale. Buttons, in a blue bell boy outfit and hat, throughout the performance, also continues the story, holding the audiences' attention at all times. This actor was the fulcrum of the pantomime, allowing the storyline to flow and motivating the audiences' involvement with the antics on stage.

Baroness Harduppe was perfectly nasty and condescending to her husband, Baron Harduppe. These two worked well together with their comedic rhetoric and the audience especially enjoyed the way Baron Harduppe got his comeuppance with his monstrous wife.

Likewise, Dandini and Prince Charming played their parts perfectly, both having confident stage presence, clear diction and tuneful singing voices, beautifully dressed in gorgeous costumes of velvet or gold brocaded coats, shorts and boots. Queen Kate was portrayed as a 'worry wort' who irritated her pompous husband King William, a genuine old married couple who loved to hate one another which brought a funny dynamic to this pair.

And then the two ugly sisters captured the audience attention as they entered the auditorium loudly and with a bang. Wisteria in her brightly coloured red and yellow patchwork dress, red shorts and pink wig and with a high speaking voice dropping into a deep male voice for comic effect and Begonia, in a yellow dress with red bow, white tights and red wig, the more effeminate of the two (if this were possible) and the one who called Buttons everything but Buttons, poor 'Buttocks'! These two actors were hilarious throughout, singing songs such as 'Dear Future Husband' and 'It's Raining Men' and interacting flirtatiously with Pever and Simple, very naughtily at times. They had the audience in stitches whenever they were on stage! Well done indeed.

Usually the terrible 'Uglies' are the main comedy duo in Cinderella however not in this production. We are introduced to Pever and Simpal (pure and simple), 'Private Eyes' or 'Primate Defectives' employed by Baron Harduppe to keep an eye on his wicked wife. I loved the laughable interaction between these two actors especially when pretending to be Prince Charming and Dandini. They must have had so much fun in rehearsal with the ugly sisters as this quartet worked fantastically well on stage.

The gentleness of the actor portraying Cinderella was just lovely. A cleverly understated performance which complimented the comedic characters utterly. Her costume of rags which, extraordinarily, transformed into her ballgown for the end of Act One was greeted with ooh's and aah's and cheers from the audience. This leads me to make special mention of the wardrobe team of Bec Gooding and Leala Watson, who dressed their actors perfectly, creating not only a transformation dress but some hideous Ugly Sister costumes, especially the blue flowery dressed and blue wigs for the garden party scene and their tennis outfits! Perfect.

The lead characters were supported by a very talented junior chorus who danced and sang beautifully to 'Life's a Happy Song' and 'Dance Your Cares Away' with Dandini and gave their all in the finale song 'Reach' alongside the adult chorus members.

As I stated, the performing space has its difficulties for the set design and construction however the backdrops were painted well, complimenting the costumes and the backstage crew were swift with their scene changes. Lighting was good and sound was clear. There was the odd issue with the hand- held mic however this was quickly rectified. I could hear and see every actor at all times which is the result required. It always impresses me how CODS are able to create an

imaginary world in spaces that are not created for theatre or pantomimes.

This production was directed and choreographed expertly by Holly Harris and I was delighted to see it was well supported with a full auditorium. The audience left smiling as did myself and my husband. I congratulate the whole company for producing such an enjoyable pantomime. Well done.

Lyn Burgoyne

Noda Representative (District 5, Mid and East Devon).

CATH KELLY : LEAD YOUTH WORKER

Re CODS Pantomime 'Cinderella'

I am just getting in touch to say how much fun we had at the panto. Our young people were so happy afterwards.

25% of the group had never been to a panto or to the theatre before and this was a really special occasion for them.

Several young people had additional needs, including our friend in the front row. At one point I asked him if he was able to be quiet but he said he couldn't, this was the most exciting thing that had ever happened to him. I wanted to thank the cast for their tolerance and professionalism - it is hard to be heckled but it was all from a good place. At the end of the show 2 of the cast high fived him as they left the stage - and he told me 'this is the best day of my life'.

Sometimes we can underestimate the impact we as adults have on young people - but this evening was a great reminder to me of the difference we can make.

Thank you so much, and please thank all the cast and crew, this was a great evening out for us.

Best wishes Cath

Catherine Kelly

Lead Youth Worker and DSL

Crediton Town Council