

## **ADJUDICATION REPORT**

**GLASTONBURY & STREET MUSICAL COMEDY SOCIETY**  
**PRESENT “SLEEPING BEAUTY” BY ALAN P. FRAYN**  
**ON SUNDAY 29<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 6:00PM**

**AT THE STRODE THEATRE, STREET**

**ADJUDICATOR: LEE BAKER, TAUNTON**

After a short journey through the mists of Avalon, and across the Somerset Levels on a cold, wet Sunday evening, I was thoroughly looking forward to settling down and watching Glastonbury and Street Musical Comedy Society (G&SMS) perform Alan Frayn’s version of Sleeping Beauty. I have not been to the Strode Theatre before, but had heard good things about previous productions, and am aware of it’s associations with Somerset Youth Dance and Strode College. I was very keen to see for myself what G&SMS were offering up to their audience this year, and I was not disappointed.

After a quick chat with Director Brian Epps, we made our way to our seats. These were placed near the front of the stalls area, with a clear view and plenty of leg-room.

As was to be expected of an early evening performance, there were a lot of excited children in evidence and this was very clearly regarded to be a “Big Village Event”. This is just what a Pantomime should be. Spreading some warmth and cheer and continuing the Christmas festivities into the New Year, especially for the children. They were clearly looking forward to it!

The auditorium was softly lit with the stage curtains drawn. The drapes added to the magical feel, coloured in tranquil lilac tones and adorned with stars. The TV screens echoed the front of the programme, and we were in no doubt about what was to unfold this evening. It was also pleasing to note that there was some Christmas background music playing to greet us as we sat down. This always makes for a warmer, friendlier welcome. A nearly full house was evident for this Sunday evening show and the performance started promptly at 6:00pm.

Please note that the following adjudication is only an opinion of one individual and is meant for advice and guidance only. It is in no way meant to offend and

indeed, the true judgement of your production will be the audience reactions and feedback through your run of performances.

## **SCRIPT**

I was unfamiliar with this particular Sleeping Beauty script, but know that you are in safe pair of hands when you are using the well-known Alan Frayn. As a Pantomime based on a traditional fairy tale, allowances can be made for some movement in the plot, through the introduction of additional characters and scenes as most of the audience are aware of the direction the story is taking. It did not disappoint and contained most of the necessary ingredients of a very traditional Pantomime, complete with Principal Boy, a beautiful princess, good and bad fairies respectively, Brokers Men and of course the Link man and Dame. There was plenty of magic to delight the children; lots of audience interaction to keep us engaged; whilst providing ample opportunity for your chorus and young dancers to showcase their talents. Traditional comedy in the form of local references and gags were also there, although I would have liked to have seen a bit more slapstick and the traditional “it’s behind you!” routine from your Comedy Gang. This script certainly incorporated a variety of dances and songs which you handled with aplomb, and gave you plenty of opportunity to demonstrate your strengths across the board.

## **PRODUCTION**

### **DIRECTION**

*Director – Brian Epps:* This pantomime was a skilful interpretation of the script. It demonstrated in no uncertain terms, the strengths of a competent society with an experienced Director at the helm. The show certainly flowed with good pace and vibrancy throughout, with lots of songs, dances and laughs. Most of the ingredients we expect of pantomime were evident and delivered well. I did feel however that there was a lack of slapstick and traditional routines. (The it’s behind you scene was noticeably missing, and I didn’t see a thigh slap). This was a shame as I feel that this element would have been the ‘icing on the cake’ and helped to enhance the comedic aspects of this Pantomime. We did, however, have some very good gags throughout and these were delivered by some excellent comic timing and clear diction at all times. I love the frequent local references, and audience interaction.

Positioning, on the whole was competently managed, although there were times during the ensemble scenes that the Principals were standing in a line, and the chorus stood behind watching the action. (I did notice during Muddles

introduction that there were some pleasing groupings of the Chorus around the lovely well, but this seemed to tail off as more people came onto the stage). There were also times, when your Principals didn't seem to have anything to do, when not part of the main action. This led to some blocking and backs to the audience. I realise that in Act 2 when Rose is brought into the throne room, there is a lot of business to get through, but I would have liked to see this more down stage towards the audience. Dame Hettie Harpic's attempts to revive the slumbering princess were all done facing away from us, and we lost the comedic facial expressions. I felt this deprived the scene of some of its dramatic impact.

I would also like to have seen more of a transition in the Throne Room to highlight the passing of 100 years. "Cobwebs and dust" could have covered the sleeping Principals, or some other effect employed to add to the comedy.

You certainly have a sizeable space to work with, so you maximised this to your advantage. Full use was made of the available space on the stage, apron and auditorium. Pace was very slick and cue bites sharp. This is creditable bearing in mind the large acting space you had to traverse. The show opened on the immortal characters as is customary and I liked how their "other worldliness" was enhanced by the spotlighting. The Fourth Wall was very clearly broken, (as it should be) and the auditorium used for several little bits and pieces including Dame Hettie Harpic's entrance, and the Revolting Children number.

I felt that the confidence demonstrated by both Principals and Chorus was very good throughout. Nobody appeared bored, tired or disinterested in any way which is excellent considering the age of some of your chorus members in particular. Clearly lots of time had been spent in the rehearsal studio. Everybody got into character and their enjoyment was obvious.

Casting of any show can be extremely challenging, but I would imagine with the wealth of actors and actresses on show, this was an area you didn't struggle with? More likely the difficulty is finding a script that can showcase the plethora of talent you had available and ensuring you don't disappoint your loyal team members. Pantomime is very much a team effort and welcoming newcomers and maintaining the support of your stalwarts is crucial to its success. It was clear that you played to your strengths and nobody looked uncomfortable and or in difficulty with the various roles they were required to fill.

The Community Song, was very engaging, and delivered well by Muddles and Dame Hettie Harpic, despite the difficulty of working with an audience on two levels. It was a good idea to pick a well-known song with movement, so the

audience had no difficulty in participating. They worked hard to get everybody involved and I was unaware of any reluctance on part of the audience, so this House number was very well managed. It also didn't drag on too long, and just gave the cast enough time to cover the costume change. Well done.

The Walk down and Finale was pitched perfectly. I like it when all cast are given the opportunity to have time to receive the appreciation from the audience that they so readily deserved, and the stage was packed full with colour and vibrancy.

I do appreciate that directing any show is a huge task, and these minor, small pointers certainly did not mar my enjoyment, or that of this very good, participating audience. Well done Brian.

## **CHOREOGRAPHY**

*Choreographer – Shelley Smith:* This was the strongest point of the production, and it was apparent that a lot of time had been put in by everybody to get this right. The dances were well drilled and coordinated and everyone knew what they were doing and when they had to be doing it. The opening number, “A Brand New Day” from the Wiz, was bright and welcoming and just the visual treat that gets a Pantomime off to a jaunty start. I felt that the members of the junior chorus and dance group, who came into their own with “Revoltin’ Children”, were especially good. They came across very enthusiastically and thoroughly enjoying of every minute with plenty of attitude and big smiles where appropriate. I lost count of the costume changes and can only imagine the flurry of activity back stage as everyone rushed between scenes. I applaud you for the variety and styles of dance and the innovative use of a tap routine to “Rock Around the Clock”. This was unexpected, but surprisingly worked! I liked the routines particularly in the dances ‘Spice up Your Life and ‘I’m Still Standing’. In fact all the chorus numbers right from the off, packed a punch and kept the energy levels up. The dance and movement were thoroughly entertaining from start to finish. Excellent work Shelley. Well done.

## **STAGE MANAGEMENT**

*Stage Manager – Charlotte Vowles:*

*Sound – Dave Riley and Team:*

*Lighting – Chris Sealey:*

As can be expected from a professional team, this was expertly handled. You all clearly worked very collaboratively to ensure that the overall effect was visually appealing and your creative skills are evident. Excellent work everyone.

## MUSIC

*Musical Director –Shaun Rigby:* Music is the gel that keeps the Pantomime together and Shaun Rigby and the bands talents were clear evidence of this. I realise that Shaun is a professional, but this is clearly an area where you get what you pay for! It's always a pleasure to have live music in a theatre, and this is one area where budgets allowing, it pays not to skimp.

With 21 musical numbers listed in the script, and other incidental pieces my first impression was that this was too many. (One minor point – It helps if the song choices are listed in the Programme so that nobody is missed or remains uncredited). I appreciate that you have some accomplished vocalists in the Society and a Pantomime is the perfect opportunity to showcase them, but I was concerned about running times. You quite rightly shortened some pieces and it was clear that you collaborated closely with the choreographer, regarding timings and tempo on the chorus numbers. So my concern, proved to be unfounded with the first act running to an hour and ten minutes, and the whole production finishing by half past eight.

All Principals, backing singers and the ensemble sang competently and I didn't hear anything off key. I could tell that everyone was comfortable with their songs, were thoroughly rehearsed and knew them well. There were also several harmonies and counter lyrics employed during some of the solos via the use of The Rainbow Fairies and this enhanced the overall sound and attack. The band accompanied the vocals well, and did not drown out or overpower the lyrics. I also liked the bits of additional percussion that were employed in the comedy, such as Muddles gags, the school room scene and the arrival on stage of Dame Hettie Harpic and Witch Hazel.

The opening number "Brand New Day" was a great way to start the show, with a packed stage and plenty of colour. In fact I can't fault the ensemble numbers at all. From the beginning to the end, the vocals were spot on, the energy was apparent and the music carried us along. You certainly managed to fit your songs to the strengths of the individuals and the solos and duets were all sung adeptly by the respective characters. The Priscilla Finale Medley was a great way to finish, and despite the strenuous dance numbers throughout the evening, the ensemble still managed to inject energy and enthusiasm into this last piece. We definitely finished on a high! Excellent work everyone.

## **COSTUMES AND MAKE UP**

*Wardrobe – Di Gifford, Liz Bradwell:* Although the majority of the costumes have been hired and are not society made, (Triple C Costume Hire, SW School of Dance), I don't under-estimate the sizeable amount of work that goes into sourcing, measuring and fitting each cast member for their wardrobe. You had a large cast to cater for, and I can imagine that with two teams of children to look after, a large chorus and the Dame, you've had a very industrious Christmas! I lost count of the costume changes, but all were appropriate for the age of the wearer and allowed them to sing and dance unencumbered.

I would have liked to see the Dame in hoops (your stage would have allowed for it), but budgets being what they are, I can understand that "a wig and a rig for every scene" may have been stretching the finances a bit far. I do commend you on her shoe choices however, and the Doc Marten boots were just right for her opening scene.

I did like the little attention to detail with other costumes: such as the Rainbow Fairies having ribbons on their ballet shoes and sashes to match their wands; Witch Hazel's ring which sparked on her entrances and the vibrant colours of the chorus. The pleasing colour tones of gold and blue really oozed magic for the Finale number which brought the house down. Well done ladies.

*Make Up – Emma Czelusta, Maria Salter & Team:* This was very visually appealing and nobody looked washed out or pale. Your junior chorus looked fresh faced, which contrasted with the ethereal make up of your Rainbow Fairies. (Nice touch with the complimenting eye-shadows to suit their colour). All immortals glittered and sparkled as they should, in contrast to the other Principals. The Dame's and Muddles make-up was well applied and reflected the comedic roles they were portraying. Good work everyone.

## **ROMANCE**

The romance kindled by this Pantomime between Rose and Prince Alexis/Alexander was entirely believable, and was ably demonstrated in the "Walk Me Home" and "Hero" duets in Act II. You were very successful here in it unfolding to the audience without any hint of embarrassment or self-consciousness.

## **COMEDY**

Without comedy, Pantomime simply cannot flourish. The best shows are those where the humour is delivered with confidence and aplomb. Your team of Fetch and Carry, Muddles and Dame Hettie Harpic alongside the King and Queen certainly contributed to this. They bounced off each other very well with their gags, innuendo and plenty of local references. As mentioned previously I would have liked to see more slapstick and tradition but the cast certainly managed the scripted comedy very well.

Dame Hettie Harpic's man-hungry nature was playfully brought the fore with her interactions with "Wayne" on the night we were there. This was skilfully done and Dave Titchener is clearly no stranger to working with an audience. She really came into her own in the School Room scene and had great timing working alongside the rest of the comedy gang. This was the funniest scene of the show for me as Dame Hettie really held this together. She really knew how to work that paddle! Poor Muddles!

Fetch and Carry also brought us some humour, despite this not being the best script for a Brokers Pairing. They handled the invitation posting scene very clearly, and diction and timing was spot on. In fact all their scenes were very funny when they were utilised. I did notice that they had excellent singing voices too, and perhaps a trick was missed by not incorporating a comedy musical number?

Please don't ever forget, the audience are the true judges of comedy in any Pantomime. There was certainly no doubt in my eyes that they thoroughly enjoyed the show and had a good laugh as I did. This is clearly what you set out to achieve.

## **PERFORMANCES**

### **CHORUS AND DANCERS**

If I have missed any character or individual from this piece, I do apologise, but please take this section as most definitely including you. A pantomime cannot function without a chorus and dancers. On the evening we attended, Junior Teams Carry and Shine were performing. The success of any show is dependant on every member of the cast maintaining the magic of theatre and every single person must always be 'in character'. Each and every one of you can be proud of yourselves. You all worked extremely hard and it was undoubtedly clear that you had done all that the Production Team had asked of you. You all sang and

danced well and were seen constantly smiling and enjoying yourselves throughout.

The audience thoroughly enjoyed your performances and so did I. There are clearly a lot of stars in the making at Glastonbury and Street Musical Comedy Society for future productions. Well done

### **KING CACTUS – PLAYED BY MATT TURNER**

You have a very commanding stage presence Matt and really looked the part of the King (and new doting dad) with your excellent costume and crown. The delivery of your lines and diction was also very good indeed, and you had good comic timing in your repartee with Queen Marigold. When you are on stage you have that ability to be able to hold a scene together and control and command the stage and scenes well without taking over. You had to play the “straight” character in a lot of the comic gags which can sometimes be difficult to do, but you did this admirably. You also made a sizeable contribution to the vocals in the ensemble numbers so well done Matt.

### **QUEEN MARIGOLD – PLAYED BY JO TURLEY**

This was a good character part, which you played very well. Your opening scenes with the new-born baby and introduction of Dame Hettie Harpic certainly contributed to the humour in this Pantomime. You played off the King very well, and have a very natural ability to keep a straight face whilst delivering the gag, which reminded me of Jennifer Saunders! You also made a sizeable contribution to the chorus numbers and were clearly having the time of your life. Well done Jo.

### **PRINCESS ROSE (16) – PLAYED BY ELISHA WEBSTER**

You played your part very sweetly and with great assurance Elisha. You delivered your lines faultlessly and have a very natural presence on stage, superbly suited to the part of the lovely young maiden. The romance kindled between you and Prince Alexis/Alexander was entirely believable, and ably demonstrated in your harmonious duets. You clearly had worked very hard to develop this character. Well done.

### **PRINCESS ROSE (JNR) – PLAYED BY LOTTIE GILBY**

You played the younger Princess Rose with great confidence Lottie, and it was obvious that you were having the time of your life in the school room scene. I



loved your spunky attitude which manifested itself in the Revolting Children song. As well as this cameo, your contribution to the dancing and chorus did not go unobserved. Very well done indeed.

### **NURSE HETTIE HARPIC – PLAYED BY DAVE TITCHENER**

In my opinion, a Dame should have a combination of comedy, variety, facial expressions, humour, and good interaction with the audience. You certainly had this in abundance, and I especially liked your attention to detail and innovation when you were not the focus of proceedings and you always remained stoutly in role. I would have liked to see a bit more lilt to your voice, but overall this was a creditable performance. It is evident that you are no stranger to the stage and you were enjoying yourself immensely, alongside the other Principals. You wore your costumes well and looked a natural, with good stage presence and I loved those Doc Marten boots! (I do judge a Dame on her shoe choices, and you got this just right). You contributed a great deal to the comedy in this show, and kept it moving along at pace. Good work Dave.

### **MUDDLES – PLAYED BY CHRISTIAN LOCKYER**

A very fine most enthusiastic and energetic performance Christian. You certainly know how to strike up a rapport with the audience and hold it well. I loved your command of the stage and positioning which varied well throughout. The slapstick in the school room scene with Dame Hettie Harpic was the comedic highlight of the show for me despite bringing tears to my eyes! You managed the running gag well, and the audience always gave you your required cue of “Muddles, don’t get muddled!” Good work on vocals too, with your contributions to the chorus numbers being performed whilst remaining solidly in character. You managed the Community number with Dame Hettie Harpic very skilfully, and kept the show moving along at a suitable pace. (I appreciate it can’t be easy working on two levels, but you kept everyone involved). Good job Christian. Well done.

### **PRINCE ALEXIS/ALEXANDER – PLAYED BY EMMA POWELL**

You have a first class stage presence and excellent vocal projection Emma, as befits a Principal Boy. Your deportment and manly strut always commanded our attention, even when you weren’t the centre of proceedings. Your solos and duets were sung very competently and this culminated in some great harmonies with Princess Rose, which must always be commended. Well done.

## **FETCH AND CARRIE – PLAYED BY MATTY WILSON AND GLYNN WEBSTER**

I always write the Brokers Men as a comedy duo, because it's very much a team effort proving the "whole is greater than the Sum of its Parts". It would feel wrong to write about you in solo as much of the comedy seen is the result of the chemistry between you. Although, maybe not the funniest pair of Brokers men I have seen, due to a lack of traditional slapstick in this script, you both made this a fun pairing. I liked the timing of the "Invitation/Letter" scene which was skilfully done. You contributed greatly to the comedy in the School Room Scene, and this was clearly an area where you had worked hard. Your contributions to the musical numbers, especially Revolting Children were also noted. (Don't think I will be forgetting that worm in a hurry, Matty!) Your obvious enjoyment of the roles infected the audience who could not help but warm to you. Well done both.

## **GOOD FAIRY LILAC – PLAYED BY BECKY COOK**

You looked extremely magical with your excellent costume and makeup, and dominated the stage whenever you were present. We never failed to understand you and you delivered those rhyming couplets very clearly. You handled the comedy aspect of the spell casting with your tablet very well, and we were left in no doubt that everything was going to be put right in the end. Your singing ability was never in doubt, ably demonstrated in the "Dream a Little Dream", and "When you Believe" songs, accompanied by the Rainbow Fairies. This character is of course essential to the whole story, and I thought you portrayed her maternal concern for Princess Rose very adroitly. Well done Becky.

## **BAD WITCH HAZEL – PLAYED BY CHERRY LEWIS**

We expect a lot from our Panto villains Cherry, and you portrayed this nasty immortal with clear and confident precision. You were quite rightly, and without any encouragement booed and heckled well from the start by the audience, assisted by some good musical introductions giving us fair warnings of your impending arrival! You used the stage well and never broke the immortal line. Your excellent singing voice was demonstrated in the "I'm Still Standing" solo, which was a highlight of the production for me. Very well done indeed.

## **THE RAINBOW FAIRIES – PLAYED BY TEAM SHINE**

On Sunday evening I think I had the pleasure of watching Team Shine go about their immortal business. I haven't singled you out individually because it was very much an ensemble characterisation. You all did extremely well with your dancing and singing and it was clear that a great deal of hard work had been put in at the rehearsal studio. You worked hard throughout with the harmonies and provided some much needed backing accompaniment on some of the more soulful songs. I heard all your lines very clearly, and you were always positioned so that you didn't upstage Fairy Lilac. You all looked lovely in your costumes, and there was no doubt which colour you represented. Well done Rainbow Fairies!

### **SUMMARY**

This was a very magical, enjoyable Pantomime and everyone played their parts well. I am sure that the local audience will be talking about it for many months to come. Grateful thanks must go to everyone for months of hard graft – to all those front-of-house and behind-the-scenes who made this production of Sleeping Beauty the show it was. On behalf of the audience, I would like to applaud you for such a spectacle considering all the trials and tribulations that putting together a show like this entails. Well done to one and all.

**BEST WISHES**

**LEE BAKER**

**ADJUDICATOR – TAUNTON**

**1<sup>st</sup> JANUARY 2020**

