

ROSE BOWL ADJUDICATION

DATE: 2.30 Sunday 31 December 2017

ADJUDICATOR: Barbara Smith

SETTING

The Set hired from Scenery Hire Ltd and Little Shop of Hires was an excellent choice for this Pantomime and with the many well painted backcloths affording fine changes of location, and perfectly suited to the proportions of the stage with an effective Border around the Pros Arch. I appreciated the Pre-set with Gauze with title 'Jack and the Beanstalk' in front of a colourful Woodland backcloth, backlit with robo-gobos, all projecting a fine anticipation of Pantomime. We moved from a backcloth of a Medieval Town Square to Countryside, to a Barn Milking Parlour, Cloudland, and an impressive Giant's Kitchen; castle corridor, and finally back home with a ruched curtain for the Finale. All these backcloths were well painted and atmospheric and suiting the various locations.

STAGE MANAGEMENT

The scene changes were effected quickly and smoothly apart from the two awkward changes from Giant Kitchen to Passage in Giant Castle, and perhaps it might have been better to have a front backcloth with less acting area in order to set the Kitchen behind. Prompts for Sound and Lighting well cued apart from Giant Voice mic'ing at beginning of Act 2. The exits and entrances of the large Chorus were excellently managed and the quick changes for Dame very well managed backstage.

There was obviously a very well trained and disciplined Stage Crew particularly with so many scene changes and a very large Chorus.

PROPS

The Props were again in excellent style and well presented. A fine spindle with lots of string for the 'string joke' and props for the Milking Scene and traditional 'custard pie' plate of foam. A very effective 'growing' Beanstalk from the refuse bin set on a plinth outside the Dames' House, and then excellent large cage, giant's table and chair, a good harp, and sword for Jack.

COSTUMES, MAKE-UP & WIGS

The Costumes hired from Triple C's Costumes were excellent both with colour and style projecting a traditional Pantomime atmosphere with mixture of fashion both Period, Present, and Fantasy. The Dame had many changes of colourful costume and wigs, and Simon with multi-coloured with striped socks, full shirts, and 'Baker Boy' berets. King sumptuous in red coat and breeches, Lord Crusty formal in coat, breeches and white periwig. I appreciated zany Fairy Grapevine in her bright purple and dark pink costume complete with changes of glasses, and Fleshcreep in black with top hat and velvet tails with green labels, Jack in patched trousers and Violet in pretty dress, but I was disappointed with Daisy in a basic cow costume which did not allow for maximum effect in the Milking Scene. The costumes for the Chorus were first class both for Junior and Intermediate groups and the Specialist Dancers looked superb in their many numbers – I especially appreciated the red uniforms and busby hats in the marching number, the masks in the haunting scene, also the beanstalk growing sequence with the sequined floating green costumes, and the superb 'Shake Your Feather' outfits.

The Dame wigs and periwig for Lord Crusty good, and the excellent long curled hairstyling for the Chorus was superb and must have taken a skilled time to achieve for each performance, and the Fairy with lovely styled Ash blonde hair. All looked immaculate.

Make-up again excellent and in fine character style with pale faced and hollowed eyed Fleshcreep to the excellently exaggerated OTT Dame Makeup, and the touch of freckles for Simon. Fairy make-up was in fine style as was Lord Crusty, and the Chorus looked excellent in immaculate make-ups. Set, Costume, Make-up, and Wigs added greatly to the excellent visuals.

DIRECTION

The Direction had ensured that all the technical elements were firmly co-ordinated and an excellent visual presentation was projected in true Pantomime style. The characterisations were all secure and projected with energy and fine vocalisation and security. The input of the Dancers and Chorus was first class and made an impressive impact, and the projection of Good and Evil by Fairy Grapevine and Fleshcreep was excellent. The impact of the growing Beanstalk from the refuse bin was very good, and the stage business and slapstick which is so important in Pantomime was basically secure, but there was a problem in the fact that it was often very protracted and the punch line lost impact. For instance the 'String' joke was very well conceived but it took so long to conclude, and the Princess was left holding the spindle on and off for a long time before the Dame finally appeared at the other end. The Milking Scene, although having some good stage business, took a long time to reach its conclusion with a rather weak Cow 'delivery' of various forms of 'milk'. There was an inherent problem with this Production in that the script was long and wordy with the convoluted and protracted jokes before the realisation of the punch line. In Act 2 the second, 'Somewhere in the Castle' scene could well have been cut as we had already experienced a traditional 'chase' sequence. I felt gradually during the progress of the production a balance of characterisation was lost, with Simon dominating the stage with business and dialogue, rather than the Dame.

All the characters projected their dialogue clearly and with an excellent security with the text and all related well with the audience. Although following the traditional story line of 'Jack and the Beanstalk' and having excellent Visuals, Dance, and Characterisation which were a delight to watch, this Pantomime suffered from overlong scripting which slowed pace and impact, and it could well have been cut and hence reduced the nearly three hours' duration.

MUSIC

The musical combination of Keyboard, Reeds, Bass, and Percussion was perfect both for the Pantomime numbers and also suiting the smaller Venue. Throughout the balance of music with the vocals was very good and well modulated and the Drumming was never dominating, and with the live sound effects well timed and effective. There was always a well timed rhythmic backing for all the songs and with sensitivity for the more lyrical numbers, and strong drumming beat for Rap number, 'Paradise'. Very fine Keyboard underscoring for Milking Scene and for scene changes. Good Band input into the Chase Scene with fine rhythm. The smooth and well timed musical input gave a fine input to the success of the Pantomime.

SINGING

The solo singing input was good with a very strong input from the Chorus who projected each number with strength, vitality, and strongly projected vocalisation. The opening number with the Chorus with 'Footloose' made a strong vocal impact and set a strong and energised Pantomime atmosphere. Jack and Violet with, 'I Could Easily Fall (In Love With You)' was well projected with a fine pitch from Violet and a good quality,

Light, tenor input from Jack and making this a fine duet number. The Rap number 'Paradise' with a strongly energised input from Fleshcreep, Fairy, and Helpers, and a well characterised input from Jack for 'Farewell Daisy' number.

Act 2 and 'Violet's Lament' - a challenging number with a wide range of notes was delivered with great feeling but lower notes did tend to be a little forced. However, the song made a fine impact being sung from the cage in the Giant's Kitchen. Fleshcreep with 'Romance' gave a finely characterised projection of this song. A good duet with Violet and Jack with strong input from the Chorus, 'I Only Want To Be With You' and a strongly projected Finale number. There was minimal solo singing input but a strong and energised Chorus input.

SOUND

The personal Mics were well controlled and sound balance with the Band also very good. There was a minor problem as already mentioned about a mic being switched on for the Giant at beginning of Act 2, but I was not happy with the re-verb on the live Giant voice as it was difficult to capture exactly what the Giant was saying, due to a strong sibilant sound to the dialogue due vocal distortion. All the sound recordings used for effects and music were excellent both with quality and reproduction.

MOVEMENT

I was impressed with the fine technique of the Dancers. The Chorus was large and the acting area limited and this did inhibit patterns of movement which was mainly in lines and with a maximum of use of arm movements. The Specialist Dancers were excellent, and both the Intermediate and Junior Chorus performed to a high standard with all dancers in time, with energy, and a fine animation and smiling faces. Fine first number in true Panto style with the Chorus as Villagers and with excellent input from Jack, and then good grouping of the Villagers during dialogue. The Line Dance in the Barn Milking Scene was excellent and I was impressed with the input of all especially the Junior Chorus. I was disappointed that the Cow did not have the traditional 'Cow' dance during the Milking Scene, and in fact the Cow movement could have been choreographed to give a more co-ordinated movement with the 'two sets of legs'. Jack had good movement in 'Farewell Daisy'. I have to be truthful that I found the number, 'Simon's Efforts' although amusing and very well executed, a little bizarre with its intention of Simon proving his talent to the Dame dressed as a 'Bean' and with psychedelic spirits around him – however it was an impressive and very well executed routine. The following number 'The Beanstalk Grows' was excellently executed and choreographed in balletic style and with a fine use of the stage.

Act 2 and 'Shake Your Tailfeather' was an excellent routine with Dancers and both Intermediate and Junior Chorus. There was a good variety of steps and fine twist input all with good technique and impressive energy and well timed by all. 'Army of Two' had amusing marching with slow and quick steps and excellent input from the Dancers with red coats and Busbys and a very energised and 'exaggerated' routine with good step variety and technique. Another effective number for the 'haunted' scene with Masked Dancers, and later a convincing sword fight. The Finale was projected with an energised routine with effective arm movements. The Dance input added greatly to the Pantomime.

LIGHTING

The lighting input was excellent and added greatly to the visual effect of the Pantomime. A good use of Spot on Fairy Grapevine and Fleshcreep entrances often dimly lit accompanied by a thunder effect. There was an effective use of purple/pink and gold for bright daylight scenes and then greens effectively used for the Giant Castle passages. An excellent use of cross lighting for the Beanstalk Growing dance sequence. The lighting was excellently cued and controlled and added greatly to the various atmospheres and locations of the many scenes.

ACTING

JACK – A lively and well motivated characterisation relating well to all other characters and especially Princess Violet, and his scenes with her were projected with sensitivity. He made immediate impact with his smart entrances and exits and his excellent movement and dance skills and promising singing voice. The input into taking the Cow to Market and meeting with Fleshcreep although a wordy sequence was a well-played parting with Daisy. A fine distress and urgency when realising that Violet is in the Giant's power and good piece 'climbing' the Beanstalk. Well timed sword fight and rescue of Violet. A well played 'Hero' role.

SIMPLE SIMON – From the moment he appeared there was an instant rapport and relating with the audience both with energy and excellent facial expression and body language. At first he was an excellent stooge and sidekick for his Mother Dame Trott and supported her jokes, but gradually from the Milking Parlour Scene, Simon with his dialogue, became the more the dominant, taking the audience's attention and feeding lines to the Dame, although both were relating to the audience with excellent energy. He kept a fine pace and cuing throughout and his delivery of punch lines was very good. A fine relating with the children in the traditional Audience Song piece. This was a fine performance of boundless energy and excellent relating with the audience.

PRINCESS VIOLET – A very sweet and romantic characterisation in true Pantomime style and with lovely 'skipping' entrances and exits. She related well with Jack and together made a fine romantic pair. The scene imprisoned in the cage in the Giant Kitchen was well played with her urgency to help find the key to release her.

With her fine singing and movement skills a well played role was projected in the traditional romantic Pantomime style.

KING BING – A very regal and upright and 'upper crust,' Kingly presence, and the actor possessed a fine quality speaking voice which was projected with authority. A good piece when going into raptures about milky puddings. A regal relating with the attentive Lord Crusty. A fine regal characterisation of the Pantomime King.

DAISY THE COW – As mentioned I was disappointed with the basic Cow outfit which could not afford much help in the 'milk producing' scene - I have worked with and seen much better Cow costumes. I felt too little attention had been given to the two girls in co-ordinating their leg movements together and was disappointed there was not the traditional 'Cow Dance', and felt they could have achieved much more with more guidance. There were fine reactions in the Milking piece with Simon despite the lack of 'mechanics' with the delivery of milk and again fine reactions to being sold.

DAME DEIDRE – A superb, first 'flying' entrance and I appreciated the natural quality voice used instead of the often very forced 'falsetto' which is difficult to keep going. Fine delivery of the first one-liner jokes and then a fine soliloquy and relating with the audience with superb energy although I did feel the throwing of the sweets was protracted and slowed pace – but the children appreciated it. Relating very well with Simon, despite the tendency for his role to become the more dominant and in fact 'clever' with repartee during the Second Act. Good input into the Giant Castle scenes with energy and fine body language. Throughout the fine character projection and relating with all on stage were excellent, with a never failing energy and strong vocal presence.

LORD CRUSTY - The character developed strongly throughout the Pantomime from a flustered first presence with the King to a very amiable and 'camp effete' and becoming quite madly 'silly'. Full of energy and smartly cued delivery of dialogue and projecting a very engaging presence. Excellent facial expressions and body language throughout. I enjoyed this characterisation throughout its progress.

FAIRY GRAPEVINE - Delightfully zany and full of fun – she brightened up the stage every time she appeared. Excellent command of the rhyme and a perfect foil for Fleshcreep. A lovely perkiness with gestures, expressions, and full of energy – and those changes of glasses added to her sense of fun. I really appreciated this characterisation.

FLESHCREEP - Another excellent characterisation and again a perfect contrast to Fairy Grapevine and like her a fine command of the opening rhyming. A superb evil laugh and excellent menacing voice. Good piece as the 'stranger' Jack meets on way to Market and fine evil expression. There was a fine 'cringing' body language to the Giant Voice. His delivery was always well cued and he kept the pace of his scene going well. This was a first class characterisation and added greatly to the atmosphere of the Pantomime.

GIANT VOICE - A fine quality voice which I felt would have been better without the muffled distortion – the deep bass quality could have been enhanced just with volume.

DANCERS - First class technique in every way and projecting the numbers with energy and finesse – I appreciated their excellent input.

INTERMEDIATE CHORUS - Excellently energised and disciplined performance and all with good timing with each other. Always smiling and projecting the numbers with obvious enjoyment.

JUNIOR CHORUS - As with the Intermediate Chorus a first class input and again I was impressed with the discipline and smiling enjoyment of the numbers. They all had such an impressive stage presence.

TEAMWORK

The Teamwork was impressive with all relating to each other and to the audience. I was full of admiration for the energy after such a long performance, and to keep this going for six performances has my utmost congratulations and, despite certain reservations, I thoroughly enjoyed the presentation.

Thank you for your kind hospitality and I look forward to being asked to another presentation by Glastonbury & Street Musical Comedy Society in the near future.