

SLEEPING BEAUTY

Performed by The Richings Players at Iver Village Hall, Iver, Bucks.
31 January – 3 February 2007

Thank you so much for the warm welcome to Iver Village Hall to watch your Panto.

As I said to Heather, your Chairman, on the previous evening I had ventured into London to see a brilliant new production of 'Little Shop of Horrors' at the Menier Chocolate Factory Theatre, so I was really hoping that the Richings Players were not going to let me down with a bang! Well, not even the indescribably hard seat could spoil what turned out to be a smashing evening's entertainment.

I think having sat through a few of the new and slightly alternative pantos it was frankly a bit of a relief to relax and watch your traditional, yet up-to-date 'Sleeping Beauty'.

I arrived with twenty minutes to spare but stood outside for almost fifteen whilst the queue for tickets slowly passed through the hands of your one box office lady – perhaps you weren't expecting such a full house on an opening night. Worth bearing in mind though, as on another colder or rainy evening it would have been very miserable.

I also think that panto should start and finish a little earlier, perhaps 7.30 p.m., with so many children on stage and in the audience it seems logical – purely a personal observation.

Anyway, back to the show. It's really a treat for me to see so many children taking an active part in this community theatre project, young and old, families, friends, experienced players and novices all together on the stage of your local village hall – brilliant!

Apart from a few first night technical glitches with lights and sound (didn't spoil anything), a few missed lines and words and a little uncertainty from some of the children (and oldies) this first night performance was excellent and I'm sure that through the week all this was sorted out.

Sleeping Beauty is such a nice fairy tale, a story we all grew up with and, of course, a happy ending. It's always a challenge to spot the added current snippets – I liked the parody of the M & S Food advert – 'this isn't just a slice of bread' – and The Catherine Tait Show's 'how very dare you!'

I liked the audience participation, I think it was just about right. I also enjoyed reading your well designed and informative programme.

Director Adrian Uzzell, you did a really good job with this show. You should be proud of the whole cast and crew. The pace of the show was well maintained throughout although I did feel Act 1 was about ten minutes too long.

My only slight criticism of the direction is that in several scenes there were straight lines galore but there again probably nobody else noticed and in any case we all had a good time.

Musical direction by Anne Torrent was great, virtually seamless, well balanced and pitched just at the right level so as not to overpower the young voices and I don't ever recall seeing a band smile and laugh as much – well done!

Choreography was simple and effective and totally in keeping. Thank you Lynne and Sophie, sound and lighting, seemed to work well and I thought your sound man did a good job with the cues and with so many young voices – virtually everything could be heard at the back of the hall.

Set design was nice and stage management again was well handled, not easy with lots of young performers.

Hair and make-up was very effective and not over-done. A big, very special mention for your costume department, quite simply, the costumes were stunning - many congratulations, you couldn't have done a better job.

A few highlights and performances:-

'I feel like dancing' – great routine

'I got you babe' – really very good

Insect dance – Aah! It was lovely

'Love is in the air' – I loved it

Azuriel – Louise Hutton – a very good return performance, perfectly cast as the Good Fairy – perhaps a little more projection – some lines got lost

Fusspot - Mark Capewell – suitably underplayed – nice voice – heard everything

Tickles - Lotte Fletcher-Jonk – absolutely marvellous presence, great voice and face – well done

King Cedric - Phil Mison – Nice droll performance – loved the wig!

Queen Semolina – Linda Bainbridge – well acted – and loved the song and your movement quality, very good

Dame Ammonia - Warren Palmer – terrific acting – great voice and projection. Perfect panto dame with a fine sense of comic timing

Carabosse - Joe Gibbs – spookily reminded me of Jade Goody from where I was sitting – hence it must have been great make-up! Seriously though, this was an accomplished, suitably villainous performance – scary!

Chip & Pin - Adam Sheridan & Sophie Torrent – Good double act, well cast. You both have a good stage presence – however, you needed to deliver your lines with a little more clarity and projection – us oldies at the back missed some good lines – nevertheless you had a good rapport with the audience, well done.

Prince Valiant - Kitty Murdoch – Wow! What a great singing voice – and what a very mature performance – brilliant!

Princess Aurora - Kathryn Pople – Nice performance – perhaps needed to slow down and project a little more – we lost some lines but you show great potential, well done.

All the cast and supporting actors played their various roles, however small, to a very competent standard – well done – remember keep projecting to the back of the hall, and kids, stop your eyes wandering to look at friends and relatives in the audience and continue to enjoy being on stage. Also, oldies, learn all your words and all the songs – too many goldfish! I am sure I speak on behalf of the audience in saying we all enjoyed your ‘Sleeping Beauty’.

Well done to you all at Richings Players. Thank you once again for your hospitality and I wish you well for your next production ‘Nobody’s Perfect’ – not even a NODA rep – Oh yes he is, Oh no he isn’t!

Paul Woodstock
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