

Snow White

DATE	19th February 2020
SOCIETY	Shavington Village Festival Committee
VENUE	Shavington Academy
TYPE OF PRODUCTION	Pantomime
DIRECTOR	Rene Hancock
MUSICAL DIRECTOR	Jenny Collis-Smith
CHOREOGRAPHER	Angela Snell

Report

Author: Joe Clarke

Shavington Village Festival Committee produced their 2020 production of Snow White this week at Shavington Academy. Shavington VFC have a great story behind their existence and it is pleasing to see them so well supported by their growing audiences year on year. I was delighted to attend last year's Pantomime Production of Dick Whittington and was pleased again to return to watch Snow White. Set traditionally with traditional costumes, this panto was a visual treat. The costumes, props and set really helped establish time, location and gave this Pantomime many layers. The use of the backcloths to establish locations was used very effectively. The scene changes were very quick which helped with the overall pace. Directed by Rene Hancock, this production had many positive traits. The props and costumes really were excellent. I particularly enjoyed the costumes for the dame Nurse Edith and the many MANY cakes that made an appearance throughout. The pace was generally good, and the addition of songs was lovely too, especially some of the modern songs to keep the audience engaged. The direction was generally good throughout. I am not a fan of villagers appearing on stage for songs then disappearing afterwards so perhaps this is an area that can be looked at for their next production. At times, the pace dropped slightly due to the MANY scenes within this panto. At nearly three hours, in my opinion, this panto is too long. Some of the scenes could've been condensed and/or characters cut from the script who don't aid the story. At the beginning we were introduced to the Queen and Belinda the Fairy who were not then used for the rest of the show. Saying that, I enjoyed some of the added stuff such as the 'If I were not upon the stage' song. This was very funny and one of the highlights of the whole piece. One of the other highlights was the tangible community spirit from the audience. It was abundantly clear that there is a lot of love for Shavington Pantomime's and it was lovely to see such a supportive and

large audience. What is also clear is the emerging talent from the youth of this company. I have to say that the younger actors were great to watch, and Shavington Village Festival Committee have a great future ahead of them by bringing this youth through the ranks of the society. Having such a large cast (over 50) on stage I'm sure was a logistical nightmare so well done to Rene Handcock and her team for an enjoyable night at the theatre.

Angela Snell (Assistant Director and Choreographer) did well to incorporate lots of varying styles within this production. I really enjoyed the use of ballet with the girls *en point* at the beginning then having the same 4 girls at the end. I also enjoyed the spacing and the shaping within some of the dances. I found it a little strange that some of the ladies wore tap shoes for a number but then didn't tap dance. I also found it slightly jarring that each dance finished in a central presented position to the audience rather than enhancing the story. I can understand that dances are more like movement due to the large cast and the available space on the stage, perhaps in future you can look at ways to showcase more intensive choreography from the ensemble?

Jenny Collis-Smith was the Musical Director for this production. Despite using a few tracks, this panto was heavily based on live music which was great to see in a Pantomime. Whilst I question some of the timings and rhythms from the drummer, the band were great to hear and were sympathetic to the cast and the sound. It may have been nice to hear a few more harmonies in the group numbers but overall, I was pleased with the singing which just gets better year on year.

The sound and lighting were generally good and helped add depth and layers to the overall production. As I have already mentioned above, the set, costumes and props really were brilliant and made by the company themselves. A special mention has to go to these teams of people for their obvious hard work.

The protagonist, Snow White, was played by Mollie Slinn. Mollie certainly looked the part and displayed all of the naturalistic traits of the character. Mollie also displayed a lovely singing voice and had good storytelling. She was well cast in this role.

The Evil Stepmother was played by Rachel Hadzik-Chesters who gave a strong performance as the baddie. Rachel showed good projection and storytelling whilst moving the story along. She also showed her great singing range and belt which was very pleasing to hear. It is easy to see why Rachel has come back to the stage – long may it continue!

The Mirror was suitably played by Julie Mann. Despite being stuck inside a mirror for the whole production, Julie was able to show different sides to her character thanks to the script

interpretation. I liked the sassy and dry sense of humour that Julie displayed and I could hear every word that was spoken. I also enjoyed and appreciated the styling of her character which looked very effective from the front.

Jonathan Brett was well cast in the role of the Dame (Nurse Edith). Jonathan was funny, entertaining to watch and gave a good performance. I only wish that we had more scenes with Edith as she really did come with a great energy and comedic ability. Jonathan also had a lovely rapport with Amy Stanley (Billie) who was also entertaining to watch. Amy quickly established a nice rapport with the audience and kept it up the whole way through – no mean feat. Her scenes with the Cake Bandit (Jacob Craven), although funny, didn't add to the plot.

Garry, Larry and Barry (Andy Stanley, Jack Harris & Ian Bevan (respectively) had lots of potential as the dim-witted henchman. Although entertaining to watch, with a little more commitment to the physical comedy and energy they could've brought the house down. Saying that, they were suitably funny in the 'If I were not in a panto' song.

The seven vertically challenged men were well cast and showcased their emerging talents. Bossy (Sky Vernon) was suitably Bossy, Smiley (Daisy Ella Cullen) was suitably smiley and Drowsy (Holly Cliffe) was Drowsy enough. Joshua Craven was sweet as Shy, and Tom Beech did well as Sneezy. The two that stood out were Oscar Anderson (Grouchy) and Evie Wear (Smarty). Both displayed some lovely comedic timing as well as great projection and characterisation.

Towards the end of the Panto, the audience were treated to Prince Phillippe, played by Hannah Brett. Hannah had lovely storytelling, diction and projection. She also worked well with Snow White and both sang lovely together.

All other parts were played by the cast and each had their own part to play in order to move the story on. It is abundantly clear that there is a lot of love for the theatre and in particular this annual pantomime. The large cast and the supportive audience show that this is a yearly event filled with love and positivity. I thank Shavington Village Festival Committee for their lovely hospitality and wish them all the very best for other shows they may be involved in this year.