

## **Cinderella – Kingsley Players**

Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> December – Kingsley Community Centre

Director / Writer Colin Smith

Musical Direction / Composer Arnold Ashbrook

Choreographer Alison Whyatt

A witty, highly -energised and very original production was well received by all in attendance. The well-known classic tale, sees the beautiful Cinderella as the lowly daughter of Baron Hardup who in his quest to find a fortune to run his house-hold, instead he returns with a new wife and her two daughters, and you guessed it, no fortune. The story is set-up nicely on the introduction of two comical bailiffs “Broken Men” who are trying to get payment from Baron Hardup for outstanding debts. The Baron’s new wife, Detestable sees a great opportunity when it is announced that the Prince will hold a ball, she plans to have one of her two daughters married into the royal family. Unknown to Detestable, Buttons, Dreamy the Cat and the house mic, have plans to ensure Cinderella attends the ball and that she wins the Prince’s affections. With many hilarious pit-falls along the way, this story keeps all ages engaged until the final happy ending.

All the characters were well considered and given enough material to build good robust roles for themselves, it was nice to see that the dramatic side of this panto was well executed and not just played for laughs, which is normally the case in a pantomime.

The original score offered so much more to the evenings performance, and I was pleased to hear some rather lovely new songs which completely endorsed each character, the composer clearly understood the vision of the script writer and wrote for his cast. He was also blessed to have great vocalists to work with which really complimented his compositions.

The direction of a Panto in my estimation is one of the hardest roles, to create the expected heightened atmosphere of the audience, the ability to get the comedy spot -on and to keep all ages thoroughly engaged for the performance. The director here, did a splendid job in keeping with pantomime tradition whilst also keeping the story fresh and enjoyable. With a very committed cast he developed something very special.

The choreography was good and the cast performed well, there is a definite space issue when it comes to movement and I could see that the choreographer tried to include everyone in each chorus number. She catered for the ability of her cast and got the best from them.

It was rather lovely to see the diversity of ages in this production, from the very young to the maybe not so young, all giving a hundred percent to the performance. They were all having fun and in turn the audience joined in the merriment. One of the best audience participation moments of the evening must be, “The Twelve Days of

Christmas”, such fun and silliness, brought lots of laughter to all, even those on stage. What a hoot!

The success of any pantomime lies with its casting, a cast that can interact with the audience while keeping the pace at a good level is certainly required. In this instance, the production team had a cracking group at the fore who well equipped to handle their individual roles.

Catrin Jones, as Buttons was brilliant, she can keep things moving along and was very much in control. A belter of a voice and for a girl so young she has the brightest future in theatre.

Chloe Rigby, the very lovely Cinderella had such sincerity it would be difficult not to love this character. Another stunning vocalist, “One-day things will be different” was very nice. I would have advised her to take more consideration in her movement during her songs, she moved about a good deal, I felt standing still and using less movement, would have resulted in teary eyed audience as she has all the emotion in her vocal.

The Ugly Sisters brought the required amount of slapstick comedy, with very colourful characters. They were a great addition to their scenes dancing with the Prince was hilarious. “We’re so Beautiful” was excellent, and it reminded me of a scene from the musical “Sugar”. A very enjoyable pairing to watch.

The Broker Men, added a nice bit of comedy but certainly the highlight from this pair was their song “We need the Money Now”. A good coupling, they worked very well together.

A special mention must be given to a very young man that played the role of the King, an actor beyond his years, he delivered an excellent performance, with great characterisation. I expect to see a good deal of this young man.

Prince Rupert and Dandini were suitably cast with nice vocals and a good presence, they handled the Ball scene very well, good interaction with the Ugly Sisters.

Detestable, the characterisation matched the name very well indeed. She played the vile villain I loved this lady’s vocal which delivered “Now’s my chance” so well.

Delectable, was as the name suggests, sweet and bubbly, she played a great character and had very good comedic timing.

Poor Baron Hardup, well he was just great, the long-suffering husband of Detestable, meek as a mouse until he finds his back bone and stands up to her. I really enjoyed this role as it was more established than other productions of the same title. The song “What have I Done”, spoken mostly was very well received and it had a good deal of heart. I felt for this character as this point. A very good performance. The household staff, brought wonderful characters to the mix, all contributing to the overall feel of the production. Each played good roles.

Dreamy the cat was suitably lazy, she was not motivated to rid the house of the mice, he enjoyed their company it seemed. A nice agile young lady, played a nice

role. The supporting ensemble and the mice gave a good performance throughout and sang their hearts out.

Set for this production was clever and was suitably adapted to fit each scene. Props were also of a good standard and added to the overall look of the show. Some scenes were played in front of the blue curtains while the stage was being set behind, this team utilised all resources available to them at the venue. Wonderful thought and detail went into the "Preparing Cinderella for the ball", clever use of the curtain made it all more magical for the audience. Lighting was very good with a basic set up, it worked very well in this intimate space. Follow spot was used to create a nice atmosphere for the solo numbers. Sound was good, mostly only used for singing purposes, the cast projected very well throughout.

Costumes were as you expect from a pantomime. Loud, bright and colourful outfits for the dames were truly a sight to behold. The general cast were suited and booted well, nice attention to detail. The King's beard was a great effort to age him, worked very well.

Overall, this was a fun family show. The display on stage at the final curtain made me certain that this group are a family, a very tight unit, a great team. The sense of community was apparent, Kingsley Players have really brought great theatre to the area, giving high quality performances and a place for young people to grow and develop their skills. I commend the team that put this production together, all in all it was a great night at the theatre.