National Operatic & Dramatic Association London Region

Society : Shinfield Players

Production : Scrooge The Pantomime

Date : Friday 17th January 2020

Venue : Shinfield Theatre

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Report by : Jeanette Maskell

 Show Report

Based on Dickens’ A Christmas Carol this clever script maintained the definition of the classic Christmas ghost story whilst incorporating all the traditional pantomime characters and well worn phrases.

The eclectic choice of music was appropriate for the plot and they unashamedly used dialogue that told us exactly what the song was going to be! Bob Cratchit “What would I do if I were a Rich Man? Cue for a song! Scrooge “What type of wedding would you have”? Nora “A white wedding” Cue for a song!

It was great fun and with the youth group in the audience it was a guaranteed noisy affair with the cast bouncing off the audience at every oportunity

**Simon Kingsnorth –** (Bob Cratchit) – As Scrooge’s humble clerk this actor had developed the perfect character. He was thoughtful kind hearted and gentle, ever the optimist he created a close rapport with Mrs Cratchit and his children. Dialogue visuals and movement were all first rate and his reactions to Scrooge intuitive and perceptive. He has a great singing voice and “If I were a rich Man” suited him immensely.

**Brian Nixey –** (Ebeneezer Scrooge) – I enjoyed this actor’s performance greatly. He was mean crotchety and miserly and his dialogue bore this out famously. His change of personality after the visit of the ghosts was extremely well portrayed and I so enjoyed the little dance steps he kept doing to show his happiness. His dialogue became energetic and vital and his facial expressions alive and vivid. The rapport between him and Nora was great and they made all their scenes together fun and humorous. He doesn’t have a bad singing voice and his duet with Nora was amusing and entertaining.

**Gordon Bird –** (Nora Carrot) – They say there’s nothing like a dame and this was certainly true in the case of Nora Carrot! She suited her many costumes and matching wigs (one of which decided to fall off) brilliantly and took great delight in showing off. Her repartee with the audience was fantastic and they responded enthusiastically to her quips and banter. Unfortunately she could not decide whether to sing in her own voice or use falsetto and this impacted on her vocals causing a few notes that I’m not sure actually exist. That said she put over “White Wedding” superbly well and was a highlight of the evening.

**Danielle Corp –** (Polly Carrot) – This young lady was delightful. Her relationship with Frederic was genuine and honest which made them an endearing couple. She had expressive dialogue and visuals and her singing tuneful and harmonious

**Gabryela Dopson–** (Sam)

**Karen Bird –** (Ella) – This pairing could not have worked better if they’d tried! They bounced off each other brilliantly making their partnership light hearted funny and comical. I loved Ella’s story as to the reason why she was late. Her interaction with the audience was amazing and she had them eating out of her hands.

**Sarah Miall –** (Frederic) – I really liked this young lady. For me she gave the performance of the evening; with everything about her character being absolutely perfect. She had a great rapport with Polly and her interaction with Scrooge was exactly right. Her singing was joyous and I very much enjoyed her duet with Polly.

**Nadine Masseron –** (1st Charity Collector)

**Jesse Dopson –** (2nd Charity Collector) – This couple played their parts well with good dialogue and characterisations

**Jesse Dopson –** (Jacob Marley) – I was very much taken with this young man. His dialogue was superb with excellent dynamics and his visuals expressive and dramatic. I have a feeling this young man will go a long way!

**Nadine Masseron –** (Mrs Cratchit) – This actress had exactly the right personality for the kind homely and warm mother and wife. Her dialogue and visuals were spirited and her movement and deportment natural and easy.

**Troy Johnson –** (Martha Cratchit)

**Daisy Collins –** (Belinda Cratchit)

**Abi Jackson –** (Peter Cratchit)

**Daisy McGilvray –** (John Cratchit)

**Sophie Farmer** (Tiny Tim) – These youngsters were fabulous! They worked well together interacting and reacting as a family unit. They all had outstanding dialogue delivery and were bright and energetic in their acting. A special mention for Tiny Tim who never once forgot that he was only able to walk with the aid of a crutch!

**Clare Kendal –** (Chief Instructor of Phantoms) – I really enjoyed this minor character. She had strong clear vocals which enhanced her performance greatly. She moved well and took command of the stage and made you follow her every move.

**Hristina Kazakova –** (Ghost of Christmas Past) – This young lady was delightful! Her dialogue was clear audible and well intoned and her visuals lively and animated.

**Simon Trinder –** (Ghost of Christmas Present) – This actor had excellent dialogue delivery and made his character befittingly imposing and commanding.

**Camilla Fillingham –** (Ghost of Christmas Future) – This young lady made her presence felt even though she had no dialogue.

**Ensemble –** This group was superb portraying their many parts with gusto and enthusiasm. Their singing and dancing was excellent and they smiled their way through all the numbers they were involved in.

**Derek Lockwood –** (Director) – assisted by **Sandra Miall** – Derek had created a traditional pantomime incorporating everything that makes for a great evening’s entertainment. He had ensured all the characters were exactly what the audience were expecting and added relevant depth to the characters of Scrooge and the ghosts of Christmas. There was plenty of audience participation which he made certain the cast acted on this at every opportunity. Whilst for the most part the action flowed at a good pace there were times when the cast got themselves in a bit of a muddle and it lost impetus. Staging on the whole was excellent with good spacing and groupings; however there was an occasion in the Cratchit’s house when straight lines had been used (due to the lack of space?) which caused masking and upstaging. That said the overall performance was fun, entertaining and highly enjoyable.

**Mickayla Jade Lawrie –** (Choreographer) – This choreographer who was ably assisted by **Melanie Wickens** created routines which were diverse energetic and original. The opening number was fabulous; I thought I’d turned up at a performance of “Stomp”! The spooky phantom’s dance was slick and polished and worthy of note.

**Lara Savory –** (Musical Director) – This MD had done an amazing job with principals and chorus. Some principals had a few tuning issues however Lara had ensured that they were capable of putting their numbers over in character and that it didn’t matter if some of the notes were a bit off! She had given them confidence with entrances, and tempos and made certain that their diction was first rate. I’m not sure that I liked the mix of live music and backing tracks I personally would have preferred it all to be live. The small combo worked really well and the balance between them and the cast was absolutely spot on.

**Sam Turner –** (Stage Manager) – There was quite a lot for this SM to do. However assisted by his **Crew** (who were also responsible for the construction of the set.) he kept the action moving at a good pace by ensuring the scene changes happened quickly and efficiently.

**Tim Howling –** (Set Design) – This set adapted itself perfectly to the story and the action. It gave the cast maximum space for their scenes yet left you in no doubt as to what the scene was.

**Di Capel/Natalie Clarke –** (Art Design) – The backdrops were fantastic and depicted the scenes entirely. I loved the clocks and cog wheels used for the factory and the wintery village which had excellent definition and perspective. The portraits of Jacob Marley and Ebeneezer Scrooge in the office scene were quite brilliant. However the Cratchit’s house didn’t have quite the same impact. I understand that it needed to be stark; but the pans and carpet beater on the wall weren’t quite the right proportions.

**Matthew Chishick -** (Lighting Design) – There was a great variety of colour and depth of shade in this imaginative plot. It created an ideal atmosphere in Scrooge’s scenes with the ghosts and the spot was used to great effect for Frederic and Polly. All this was expertly operated by **Graeme Rhodes.**

**Steve Townsend** – (Sound Design) – Sound was perfect and the sound effects; of which there were many; were absolutely superb and cued to perfection by Steve Townsend/Phil Gowen (who I note was also playing guitar in the band!). I was impressed with the sound level of the thunder claps which were not intrusive yet loud and eerie.

**Carol Vockins** – (Costumes) – I liked this set of traditional pantomime costumes; they were bright and colourful and suited the characters down to the ground. Nora’s costumes were of particular note as were Sam and Ella. Bob Cratchit’s coat was perfect as was Scrooges; although I would have liked to have seen a white shirt underneath rather than a modern black T shirt. Chorus outdoor costumes were super and they all had accessories which were of the era. The ghost’s costumes were superb especially Christmas present who looked every bit like the character from the film!

**Debbie Wheeler** – (Properties) – My goodness what a lot of props! I was most impressed with the clocks and boxes in which they were packaged; they looked absolutely authentic. Then there were food items, a walk in bed, tables, chairs desks a Christmas tree chains and many many more all of which were appropriate for their use and the period.

**Sandra Miall/Derek Lockwood –** (Programme) – I really liked the cover artwork which truly encapsulated the very essence of the show. The programme itself was well laid out Christmassy and informative. The photographs by **Susie Williamson** were clear and sharp; adding greatly to the overall look

Thank you

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Jeanette Maskell - NODA Representative - London Region - Area 13