

NODA Review: The Bunbury Players

Robin Hood & the Babes in the Wood, Jubilee Centre, Mildenhall, 19 February 2015.

One Hundred productions is a cause for celebration and The Bunbury Players went all out to do just that with their annual pantomime, Alan P Frayn's *Robin Hood and the Babes in the Wood*.

In this version Robin and his trusted band of Merry Men (in tights) try to outfox the greedy Sheriff of Nottingham. Meanwhile, Nurse Nellie Nickerlastic is desperately trying to protect the Babes from the clutches of the Sheriff's bungling henchmen, Snivel and Grovel.

One of the strengths of the show was the excellent choice of music played by the talented house band **CODE of Conduct** with MD **Mark Checkley** on keyboards. Mark had obviously worked the cast hard on the songs and it showed. The singing was excellent throughout. Choreography was well executed too. **Kimberley Pearson, Mandy Morrish** and the choreography team had worked routines which suited everyone's abilities.

The colourful costumes and backcloths were splendid and the scene changes executed efficiently and as swiftly as space and facilities allowed. The lighting and sound effects were very good and all on cue which is always a bonus.

With the big age span director **Darren Mather** had mixed youth with experience and although, as is often the way, the younger actors tended to speak fast and sometimes quietly, I thought they all did well.

Darren Hitchings as Robin and **Lacey Kiefer** as Maid Marian worked well together. Both are confident and experienced performers and they led from the front. Their duet *The Song That Goes Like This* was great fun.

Michael Mears as Dame Nellie Nickerlastic without a doubt worked hard getting the audience involved by offering them 'smellie wellies'.

Making his debut with The Bunbury Players **Randy Borden** as the Sheriff of Nottingham proved a masterly and popular villain eliciting boos as he should do. I felt he could perhaps have been even more nasty especially working with two such inept henchmen as Snivel and Grovel. Well done on the dark and dirty dastardly deeds routine!

The talented **Katie Becket** in her element as Grovel and **Debbie Owen** confident as Snivel her partner in crime worked exceptionally well together as the excellent comic duo. These two were a firm favourite with the audience and justly so. The dynamite scene was very funny.

Young **Harrison Southgate** gave an enthusiastic and likeable performance as Little John. At times he could have done with a bit of extra projection but it was great to see him gaining experience in only his second principal role. Another newcomer to The Bunburys was **Olivia Parker** in the role of Will Scarlet and I have no doubt we will see much more of her in the future. The third of Robin's merry band was Friar Tuck played by **David Staines** in suitable tonsure wig and the requisite green tights under his robe.

Completing the principal cast was Bunbury stalwart **Peter Rouse** looking suitably regal as King Richard and his wards **Phoebe Freeman** and **Jake Owen** as the Babes, both new members of the society. They each did a fine job in their first show.

With such a large cast it is impossible to name everyone but there was good support from the minor players and indeed the whole Ensemble. Although the pace dipped once or twice this was a well rehearsed show which was performed with enthusiasm and enjoyment by the cast to the obvious pleasure of the capacity audience.

Well done Bunburys.

Julie Petrucci

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