

PUSS IN BOOTS – Ben Crocker

HOLSWORTHY AMATEUR THEATRICAL SOCIETY

FRIDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2019 – HOLSWORTHY THEATRE

Produced and Directed by Rob and Sue Painter

Musical Director – Georgina Bridle

One of the privileges of a NODA representative is to visit the many productions performed in the geographical area throughout the year. One of the disadvantages is that the Pantomime season runs from November to February! Each production though has to be reviewed as though it's the only one being seen. Oh yes it does!

This was the second HATS production I have attended and obviously a totally different experience from the 1<sup>st</sup> World War production 'Lest We Forget' I witnessed on my first visit. I was amazed to see that 24 of the 32 members of the cast had not been in that production which tends to suggest that the group has a wide membership that it is able to call on to fit the needs of the particular production being presented.

This group has a tradition of performing a Pantomime at this time of year and the theatre is nearly always full showing that the residents of Holsworthy are fully behind the group.

I would like to start my review by highlighting the work of the wardrobe gang of 14 ladies who dressed the entire show so colourfully and made the visual side of the evening's experience exceptional. The striptease routine of the Dame was faultless and throughout the show each character's appearance on stage in a different costume seemed to have been handled offstage without a hitch. The lighting team are also to be congratulated. The follow spots are nearly always exact and the visual effects produced are very pleasing to the eye.

The set was well designed and allowed the cast to move around freely. I did notice quite a lot of background noise when the curtains were closed and the set was being changed so maybe this is something that could be worked on with future productions. Sound from where I was sitting was not always good, which was frustrating as I could see that there were microphones occasionally in use, but if actors don't always project fully, then more use is needed of sound amplification. The energy shown by the ensemble from the song 'Reach' to the end of the production shows what a fabulous collective sound the group can make. The last few numbers were exciting and pleasing to watch which was in contrast to some of the earlier numbers which maybe didn't have the same energy levels. It is so important to hit an audience with a great opening and closing number in each half which gets people sitting up in their seats and then enthusing during the interval!

Rob and Sue Painter had got some delightful touches from the script and had assembled a talented group of soloists. This script demanded that pairs got the best out of each other and each one was well cast. Jack Lovegrove, as Jasper, and Tom Chandler-Ross as Jethro were the loveable village idiots; Jack had impeccable timing and a cheeky smile and certainly extracted the maximum comedy from his role; Tracey Wosnitzka, as Babs, and Terina Ellacott, as Betty, shared a love interest with the two lads and I did like the quartet performed by these four characters; Kim Whiting, the Good Fairy,

and Amy Clarke, the Bad Fairy set the scenes so well with their poetic introductions; Amy then also continued her evil ways alongside Grimgrab the Ogre played by Ron Lester trying so hard to win the attention of the Princess; Jodie Lawson, Princess Esmerelda, and Jo Taskis, as Jack played the leading roles well and as they were amplified for 'Somewhere' it's a pity this amplification wasn't better for others. Peter Whitehead, as Queen Wendy, was a very good Dame and was so well supported by Phil Barfett, King Wally, who really couldn't get a word in edgeways! Dan Hunt played Bobbie, the Royal Page and there were cameo roles played by John Dixon, Grant Fulcher, Charles Jeffrey Hudson, Charley Gear and Rebecca Davis. Andrea Nosworthy played the Puss without the Boots and Leighann Johns led the troupe with her portrayal of Puss in Boots. Here was an actress who naturally held centre stage and generally lifted the whole performance but overall I felt the standard of all the principals was good and helped the production attain a very good evening's entertainment.

Georgina Bridle, as Musical Director, had assembled a troupe of three musicians in the pit and for the most part the balance was good. I liked the fact that the musical numbers used to break up the script were restricted to just a verse or two. There were one or two occasions that I felt there was too much of a particular number but overall the singing was good and when the chorus raised their energy levels the standard was very good.

So the Pantomime season is over for another nine months. HATS are to be congratulated on their production. I am sorry I was unable to stay after this year's production but will hope to join you all for a drink in the pub down the road next February.

Mike Canning

NODA South West District 7 Representative