

Rapunzel

21st February 2025

Society

Probus Parish Players

Venue

Probus Village Hall

Type of Production

Pantomime

Writer

Bradford and Webster

Director

Megan Russell

Choreographer

Shannon Wignall

Many thanks to your Chairman's for her lovely welcome. It was wonderful to hear about your grant from Cornwall Council and view the upgraded facilities you now have. They will obviously make a great deal of difference to you and other users of the hall.

It was lovely to be back this year to view your pantomime Rapunzel by Bradford and Webster and to see it so well supported. The original German fairy tale was published by the Brothers Grimm in 1812 and tells the story of parents who are forced to give up their child to a witch who locks her in a tower. Her long hair being the only means by which the Prince can visit her. Adaptations have been created over the years with 'Tangled' being made in 2010.

Your new backcloths and wipes took us from the village, through the forest, to the hairdressing saloon, into the tower and inside the palace and all added detail to the scenes. The outside of the tower was well created by a 3d brick painted structure set at stage left. The props were numerous including a trolley and seats in the saloon, thrones in the palaces, bookcases and seats in the tower to the signpost. There did seem to be a few issues with the scene changes with some empty stage moments between scenes but maybe this was due to you getting used to your new equipment. The personal props were all well managed by the members of the cast especially the mop and bucket routine performed by Trixie, Bob and Curly.

The sound and lighting were well controlled by Dymond Audio who were situated at the back of the raised seating. They must have found their jobs easier this year with the introduction of the hard-wired system. The scenes were well lit to add atmosphere and colour and all the backing tracks and text could be heard clearly so the audience could follow the story. A wide variety of music from heavy metal through pop to classical was used during the show with all the numbers listed in the programme. The UV scene for the double headed knights to the 'Dance of the Knights' was well received. The sound effects added detail and the confetti cannons at the end certainly covered the audience well.

With a large cast from young to more mature your choreographer has a wide range of abilities to work with. She knew her cast and used their skills to create a variety of routines they could complete successfully. All those moving had a chance to show what they had mastered.

The members of your costume team came up trumps again this year. The females in the chorus were attired in a variety of ditsy print dresses and the males in trousers t-shirts and waistcoats. The members of the cast were cleverly dressed in outfits that clearly demonstrated their named part. The Dame's wonderful outfits were bright well-fitting and the baseball boots were just right. It was great to see that time had been taken to ensure hair, make up, accessories and footwear had been taken into account.

Dame Trixie bounced on the stage resplendent in red, white and yellow with a capacious mop cap. One personal comment, I maybe old fashioned and this is only my opinion but I really like a dame to look clean shaven. A short beard can be easily covered up with full coverage make up these days. Trixie was full of energy, many hair quips and gained instant rapport with the audience all of which were happy to respond to her requests. She introduced everyone to her saloon with all its potions and wheely chair and was completely natural when interacting with the other members of the cast and it was great to see her chase the Captain of the Guard. She showed great expressions, emotion, moved well and sang with gusto. A great performance.

Trixie's son Frankie had worked hard for a local lad and found himself a position with the Royal family as a valet to the Prince. This was not an easy job because the Prince had his own way of doing things and Frankie had to use all his persuasive skills to get him to follow the rules. Your actor played the part with confidence 'he' interacted with both the audience and other members of the cast, moved with ease and sang with assurance.

The young male protagonist in Rapunzel was the spoiled, lazy good for nothing, regally attired Prince Frederick who arrived with his two adoring social secretaries. He loved the fact that he was followed by fans wanting to take his picture and collect autographs. 'He' was a mummy's boy and had a superior manner which his father disliked and immediately disinherited him until he did something worthwhile. Your player created a good all-round performance and eventually realised that he had to change. He had great interaction with Frankie and Rapunzel and 'Hail, Rain and Sunshine' was sung with feeling.

Gracie and Macie, the Princes' 'social secretaries' were constantly fawning over him trying to get his attention. Your actors created believable characters, spoke with feeling, moved well and sang 'Hey Mickey' tunefully. Gracie was delighted to find her love was really Frankie at the end.

The newbie Fairy Flora dressed in a sparkly lace dress, purple wig, lace up boots, wings and flower wand arrived on stage ready to take up her new employment with the King and Queen. She appeared a little unsure and distracted but was determined to do her best. She grew in confidence although her first spell wasn't truly successful and triumphed at the end. Well portrayed.

Flora's polar opposite was obsessed, sarcastic evil witch Gothel. She looked striking in her red dress, black cloak, over the shoulder bag with container to gather tears and long black crimped hair. She gave a strong confident performance and 'Bloody Mary' was sung with commitment.

Bob and Curly were the comedy double act. Bob was dressed in yellow tights, cut offs, yellow long-sleeved top and chequered pattern yellow and white overtop. Curly matched Bob in blue and white. They were excellent at highlighting the differences in their personalities. Curly was obviously the straight man and Bob the stooge. Gothel had employed them to take goods to Rapunzel in the tower but they were no good at keeping secrets. They ensured every comic line was heard, showed great timing and every pratfall on point. Well played.

Portraying the eponymous female lead can be a challenge but your Rapunzel with her beautiful purple and white gown and realistic long plait made the most of her character. She had the ability to show all her emotions through innocence to love and sadness. She created a naive, trusting young woman who believed that Gothel told the truth and it was great to see her character grow in confidence as the show progressed. It was a joy to watch her find love with the Prince and 'What a Wonderful World' was beautifully sung as was her duet with the Prince.

Prince Frederick's mother and father had very different views on how he should move forward. The Queen showed clearly that he was still her little boy who could do no wrong, she fussed around him and the 'lick wash' was great. She used all her womanly wiles on her husband to get her way but to no avail. The King was fed up with his son's lack of ambition, he had made his mind up, with the help of Fairy Flora, that he needed to make a stand to make him the man he wanted. I must mention 'Puttin' on the Ritz' which was well presented by the King, Guard and chorus. Two very clear characters were created by your actors. Well done.

Your player depicting the Captain of the Guard spent the majority of the show running away from Trixie's advances. He created a strong, upright persona with a clear strong voice and great interaction with cast members.

The actor playing the Herald looked the part, was well positioned, moved with meaning and spoke with a clear voice. Lastly your chairman made the cameo part of the spider her own.

I would like to congratulate your director on her clear vision. She used her skills to ensure the funny script was brought to life. Also worth a comment is the commitment of your front of house team who welcomed everyone with a smile, those who chose to perform on stage and all those who work hard behind the scenes, without them you would not be able to entertain your enthusiastic audience. Many thanks for a great evening's entertainment.

Disclaimer

Any observation made by the reviewer can only be based on what he sees at the performance in question. The reviewer may have received information in advance of the performance and it is inevitable that his assessment will be affected by that knowledge.

The NODA Representative's intention is to give an objective critique of the overall production and in particular, the performance. It should be remembered that any review of this nature can only be objective as far as the techniques used

during the performance observed. Any criticisms expressed may not have been valid at other performances and are only made to encourage higher standards in Amateur Theatre.

It is hoped that the audience's appreciation of your efforts will have given everyone a lift and encouraged you to greater achievements in the future and that the observations made by the reviewer will prove helpful in improving future productions.

Sheila Gill
Representative NODA Southwest 2