



Be inspired by amateur theatre

Treasure Island
Bampton Players
A traditional pantomime by Ben Crocker
Directed by Avril Saxby
Musical Director: Hugh Saxby
Riverside Hall, Bampton
Thursday 21st February 2019

Following the great success of the pantomime last year, and having been heavily involved with a production of the same script recently in a much larger venue, the journey to Bampton was undertaken with eager anticipation! Although billed as a traditional panto this certainly was a script with a difference and with a large cast, including the unlikely addition of a bevy of ladies from the Smugglers Cove WI! Would the Players cope within the confines of their small venue? Well they certainly passed muster and as was to be expected put their own stamp on the production. A small band of suitably dressed musicians welcomed the audience, setting the scene with appropriate sea shanty tunes, then as two band members took to the stage with great presence as Billy Bones and Barnacle Bill scouring the horizon for passing ships, the performance began.

The opening scene at the local tavern was depicted by some impressive flats and some very authentic looking bar stools, the main characters were introduced and the plot unfolded. With much cheering and general rabble rousing from the customers the extra “canned crowd” effect was not really necessary, and as pub landlady Mrs Hawkins, agreeably played in the style of Dame Edna Everage, shared her woes and tribulations audience participation was ensured from the start. The small change from “her maid Kitty” in the script to “Jolly Roger” the “houseboy”, due probably, as is general across many societies, to the lack of young people, was fine and made for a fun cameo part. The role of Jim Hawkins, played by a very young “lad” was believably performed with good expression and delivery, and he was well complemented by his own sister as “love interest” Jenny Trelawny, the Squire’s daughter. Both youngsters performed sincerely, it was clear they shared a close bond, and made for a charming couple without any awkwardness, although at this performance they didn’t hold hands at the end! Squire Trelawny was suitably mundane trying to keep an even keel and control his wayward daughter but without success, and was all too easily led by Mrs Hawkins’s tasty “spotted dick”! In this production the part of Long John Silver was very much played against type by a female member of the company, her timing was spot on and was much more “East Enders” than “Ah, Jim Lad”, she/he had obviously seen it all before and was not about to be impressed by anything – a bold touch! Sensible as well to disguise the false leg and save the actor all that hopping about. The usual motley collection of pirates did the dirty deeds and all established their individual characters well, there was even a Welsh one! Seadog Sam and Seaweed Willy successfully managed to complicate the proceedings by enticing the Ladies of

National Operatic and Dramatic Association

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the WI on board ship disguised as pirates, and made for an endearing partnership, with the older more experienced actress leading the younger one down the slippery plank! The Ladies of the WI were a revelation with costumes that could have easily graced Ascot - just perfect! The large designer handbags were an inspired touch, and taking them on board ship and producing the array of umbrellas for the storm sequence made for a treasured moment. Towards the end castaway Ben Gunn contributed another strong character in a cameo role, trading the location of the treasure for a safe trip home. Good sound effects and lighting, a lively band, colourful costumes, and scenery, and excellent props all added to the quality of the production. As expected there were some memorable touches; the band covering up their instruments and music in the baking scene; the crew all going aboard the pirate ship: the octopus on the top of the Dame's hat; the giant Capt Bloodheart puppet in the ghost scene, all achieved in the smallest of spaces with a great deal of hard work and team spirit – and of course Polly the “ageing” parrot was the last word!

‘Tricia Barclay

NODA SW Representative District 6

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

The N.O.D.A. Representative's intention is to give an objective critique of the overall production and in particular the performance viewed. 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.

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