



Society : Chesham Theatre Company
Production : Masquerade
Date : 7th November 2013
Venue : Elgiva Theatre, Chesham
Report by : Rita Carpenter

Report

INTRODUCTION

We were greeted by Producer **Judith Watsham** and given our usual friendly welcome. Thank you for giving us my favourite seats. I was able to have a chat with Judith before the play. The foyer wasn't very busy and I felt it was such a pity the performance was not better attended but in these difficult times many of the groups are struggling with falling audiences. I do hope that Friday and Saturday were better attended.

THE PROGRAMME

Designed by **Stephen Player** and **Eleanor Phillips** with contents by **Jenny Crumpton**, it was printed on high quality paper with the NODA logo on the front and details inside of the group's NODA awards. The Director's note stated that this was a challenging production and it most certainly was. The programme had a group photo of the cast and several rehearsal photos which always adds to the general appearance taken by **Graham Parsons** from the (Chesham Photographic Club).

THE SET

This was superb, a brilliantly painted backdrop which was designed by **Peter Threadgold** and **Roger Miller**, who together with Trevor and company members were responsible for the set building. The set painting was done by **Diana Copeland** and company members. The front of the stage was decorated to depict the cellars under the opera house leaving one open for use during the play. The very cleverly constructed and decorated Box 8 kept for the ghost, was impressive and at the other side of the stage the seating for the opera audience was a very clever arrangement. The group are to be commended for this innovative set. A special mention must surely go to whoever was responsible for the amazing chandelier which was made to sway at various tense times during the proceedings.

Judith Watsham , the production manager and other company members were on props and I don't know whether they arranged the interesting fire in the witches camp but again another very clever piece of equipment. All the props were in the right place at the right time which is always a help to the cast.

LIGHTING AND SOUND

Both lighting by **Steve Cherry** and **Charlie Carrington** and Sound by **Josh Rees** were spot on. With so many scene changes they had to work really hard and did the job perfectly .I thought the voice of the ghost and the maniacal laughter was especially effective.

THE CAST

With a very large cast it would not be possible to mention everyone suffice to say there were some very strong performances. **Diana Robinson** playing Nanny Weatherwax and **Mary Murray** as Nanny Ogg were convincing in their roles as witches and **Eleanor Phillips** as Dr. Salzella was excellent especially when it transpired she was the villain of the piece. **Jason Bingley** gave a good account of himself as Dr.Undershaft. **Emily Culverhouse** was impressive as Agnes Nitt with a delightful voice. **Ian Slack** made a great Seldom Bucket owner of the Opera House and **Paul Eckersall** was entertaining as Andre.with **Amy Ellen Hill** playing the rather dizzy Christine well. I must mention **Daniel Murray** who was delightful as Death of Rats. **Nick Lansdowne** was worthy of note as Walter Plinge and Mrs Plinge Walter's mother was so well played by **Jenny Crumpton** that I didn't recognise her!. **Ellen Kretschmer** was accomplished in the role of Greebo the cat. The dialogue from the two characters who played the roles of City Watch was impeded by their face coverings but they cut impressive figures.

IN CONCLUSION

This was a challenging play for the group to stage. With 14 scenes in the first half and 16 in the second half Director **Trevor Pilling** assisted by **Tony Savage** should have ensured that the action was much slicker. In the first half the pace was slow and tighter direction would have improved this. Some of the scene changes were also time consuming thus affecting the overall pace. The script was quite clever but it took until the second half before the audience appreciated the comic lines. The play needed some fine tuning to enable it to move along with more energy and less leisurely and it would have been prudent to have the start time of 7.30 rather than finish at 11pm which is far too late for any play. Terry Pratchett writes with great energy but his stories

do not always transfer well to the stage and when they do, depending on who has adapted them, they can be very disjointed. It is therefore incumbent on the directing team to make changes, or cuts, where they feel the production would benefit, even if they have to sit at the back during the last few rehearsals and time the performance to ensure that it does not overrun.

I congratulate you on tackling what, in my opinion, is a very difficult piece of theatre, even though on occasion it did not come up to the very high standard we have come to expect from Chesham Theatre Company. Nevertheless with a strong cast who worked extremely hard it made for an interesting evening's entertainment.