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Society : Potters Bar Theatre Company
Production : A Christmas Carol
Date : 20th November 2018
Venue : Wylyotts Theatre
Report by : Michael Monk

Show Report

Thank you for inviting me to review your autumn production of 'A Christmas Carol'. There is no better way of getting into the festive mood this Christmas with this classic story. PBTC should be congratulated on delivering a production brimming with charm and joy.

Director/Choreographer – ROBBIE CRISP - This John Mortimer adaptation is fairly faithful to the original and is as Dickensian as you could hope. Set in a lovely simplistic set, designed by ROBBIE CRISP & DAVID BOTTOMLEY and using all the cast for the many scene changes, fronted by carollers, made the production move along swiftly and smoothly. Some very clever IT film and projections giving a nice contemporary but still a period atmosphere. I particularly like the projection of Scrooge and The Spirit of Christmas Past in their particular scene and the flying over the sea sequence. Good use of the haze smoke throughout creating more atmosphere on those cobbled streets of London.

Musical Director/Pianist - ALISON NICHOLAS accompanied all the 'carollers' very well and the company delivered some nice harmonies throughout. Some beautiful soloists, particular standouts were MICHELLE WILLIAMS, SARAH BREARLEY, CHRISTINE TAKKIDES and not forgetting ISABELLE MILTON. All the children sang confidently and sweetly.

Stage Manager – FRANK BUNDLE assisted by his huge crew of one TREVOR HODD-WHITE had a relatively quieter night than usual with so much help from the cast. I'm still sure there was still plenty to do behind the scenes with cueing the whole show from start to finish.

Lighting Design & Operation – CAMERON BIGGS Lighting was very nice indeed with some excellent mood lighting and the clever incorporation of IT film and projections produced by SIMON NICHOLAS only enhanced the production more. Audiences only really notice the lighting if there is something wrong and on this occasion, there was nothing adverse to report apart from a few late cues on the narrator pieces on this opening night which I'm sure you noticed and were put right for the rest of the week.

Sound design and operation – PETER DONAGHEY delivered very well and on cue throughout the performance, excellent use of the reverb for all ghosts and spirits.

Costumes by SUZANNE SIVE & THE COSTUME STORE and managed by wardrobe mistress JENNIE MENDE were superb. Each outfit was authentic down to the last detail including footwear. Well researched and executed.

Make-up & Wigs were good and complimented each character. (No credit in the programme)

Properties - All the props had been carefully sourced. Managed well by DEBBIE CONSTANTINOU-BELL , VAL GOLDING and CATHERINE LITTLE and were authentic in appearance.

Ebnezer Scrooge – JIM MARKEY delivered an effortless performance from start to finish. He worked hard at being as spiritually barren, bitter and acerbic as possible, literally spitting out his lines at times. I hope the front row didn't get too wet! Congratulations Jim.

Bob Cratchit – GARY COLLEDGE – A Joyful and a sincere gentle performance giving simplicity and enjoyment to your characterisation. Your interaction with all the Family Cratchits was delightful too.

Fred (Scrooge's Nephew) – DANNY HURLEY - Great energy and confident performance throughout. Most enjoyable.

Ghost of Jacob Marley – DERECK CROSS – Terrific performance – well done on maintaining the use of all those chains throughout your scene with Scrooge. Could easily have gone so wrong!

Spirit of Christmas Past – LORRAINE BOTTOMLY – Excellent choice of costume, wig and accessories rounded your character off beautifully. Your tempo, diction and delivery of dialogue was exemplary, this can so easily get lost when reverb is used to enhance a character.

Spirit of Christmas Present – DAVID BOTTOMLY – Strong and powerful characterisation with excellent choice of costume and wig, a little 'Hagridesque', but great fun. Some additional spiritual eye and facial make-up would have given a finishing touch to what was a faultless performance.

Christmas Yet to Come – LUKE RICKETTS – 'Word perfect' performance. Having said that your other roles were most convincing too.

Young Scrooge & Belle – HARRY HARDING & ASHLEA WALES made a delightful young couple and gave very confident and well rounded performances.

Mrs Cratchit (Assistant Director & Choreographer) – JULIE MARKEY Produced some lovely ensemble choreography which everyone looked like they were enjoying throughout the play. As for your role as Mrs C this was a lovely 'mumsy' characterisation and your interaction with all the children was delightful.

Cratchitt family - GEORGE CROSS, LILY BOTTOMLEY, JUSTINE SANSOM, LAURA CHANDLER, MILAN PATEL .

Each and every one of you showed great confidence, energy, enthusiasm and came across as a happy and warm family unit. All sang very confidently with good clear diction. It is so easy to be distracted by friends and family watching in the audience but all of you were focused on the job on hand. Well done to you all.

With so many to name individually, each and every one of the ensemble had their own individual parts to play whether as a narrator, named character or scene shifter. All of this contributed to a very smooth-running performance. Well done to you all.

The programme, compiled by JENNY COLLEDGE was very well presented with plenty of information and photos to keep the audience occupied whilst waiting for the performance to begin. Might be better to remove the job titles from the production list where these are left blank.

Thank you once again for your very kind welcome and hospitality.

Best wishes

Michael Monk
Regional Representative
NODA London District 10 (Musicals)

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Summer School (See NODA WEBSITE FOR MORTE DETAILS) 27th July – 3rd Aug 2019

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