

IRCHESTER PLAYERS

BEST OF BRITISH

SHOW REPORT

I will cut to chase – this was village pantomime at its very best, worthy of a much larger stage. In the programme director's notes you said that you had been blessed with an excellent cast, including younger members playing principal roles for the very first time. Well frankly you would never have guessed that they were principal virgins. This pantomime was indeed blessed with a first class cast that had strength in depth, a cast who clearly enjoyed themselves performing as much as the audience did watching.

The players were fortunate to be handed a peach of a script, Steve's writing has all the hallmarks of good pantomime. It was rich with humour, had a clever, easy to follow story and plenty of action and involvement for a large cast.

The show was very well directed by Steve Lack who was more than ably assisted by Luke Sheehan. Mary Holland's choreography was effective and the dancers and general company performed very well. Dinah Stevenson's band was excellent despite having to contend with two parrots in the pit (nice touch which diverted the audiences attention during smooth scene changes) and the song choices and adaptations made to the more well known numbers worked well within the story. The balance between the band and the vocalists was well handled by the technical dept as was the lighting. The set was very impressive and costumes were colourful and beautifully made.

Very strong performances came from Alex Wheeler as Jim Hawkins (who reminded me of a young Hugh Laurie with his very expressive facial gestures), Daniel Wainwright, an hilarious Dolly Hawkins, Becca Ibbs as Isabella Trelawney who's act one rendition of "On my Own" was wonderful and Nick Gough, providing once again his seafaring skills as an impressive Long John Silver. Great support came from Alan Lack as Squire Trelawney, Ian Draisey doubling as Billy Bones and Wotta Whoppa, Chris Thirwell as Dribble McGrew, Scott Murphy-Hill as blind Pew, Bobby Mutch as Benn Gunn, Sue Gough as Dr. Liversausage and Clive Minor as Captain Smellit whose surname provided a rolling gag for the comedy duo Deborah Draisey and Alison Everitt's Poop and Deck throughout the show.

The highlight of the evening for me was the hilarious principal line up singing "Now the boat is all afloat". The brilliantly choreographed routine had the audience in stitches.

I mustn't however forget to mention the youngest principal of them all – 9yr old Tom Spencer, a talent to watch out for in the future. His character Cut-throat Morgan and his pirating partners in crime, Alex Mckenzie, Kyle Dodson and Oliver Lane all put the "Yo-ho-ho" into Long John's barrel of rum. Well done all!

Please pass on my congratulations to the cast and crew and The Players committee for a thoroughly entertaining evening. I look forward to your next production.

Kindest regards

Neil Richardson - Regional Representative

NODA East Midlands