

THE ROSE BOWL AWARDS

FOR AMATEUR
DRAMA & MUSIC

NAME OF COMPANY	Hanham Players
NAME OF PRODUCTION	Aladdin
VENUE	Hanham Folk Centre
DATE	Thursday 8 th January 2009
ADJUDICATOR	Barbara Smith

PRESENTATION

SET including PROPS - This was a very well presented Pantomime with excellently designed and executed backcloths which clearly depicted the changes of scene, and added greatly to the oriental atmosphere of 'Aladdin'. The backcloth for the Market Square in Old Peking was with colourful, well painted Chinese houses and background, and made an excellent setting for the first scene. The use of blacks in between the major scenes to allow for scene changing was again well managed. The set for the Royal Palace was impressive with the excellent pillars and was with a good perspective. The Magic Cave was lovely with the steps SL leading down. In Act 2 we opened with a colourful Washing Emporium, and although well painted, I think the line of washing would have been more effective if real – and then could have afforded a lot of slapstick and stage business. The Palace in the Desert presented us with a fine Tent as a background. These colourful backcloths were an excellent background for the action of 'Aladdin'.

Props were generally good with a well characterised Plant which wilted and revived appropriately SR. A good traditional Laundry Basket, and a very fine Throne in the Palace, and the Jewels on Cushions were effective in the Cave Scene. There could have been more laundry props for the Washing Emporium – a large Mangle would have added some opportunity for excellent slapstick, and the Washing Machine was small and not in outrageous panto style, but personal props such as swords etc were very good.

STAGE MANAGEMENT – This was again very good with swift and well managed scene changes and the cueing of sound and light was very good. The exits and entrances of the large chorus on the small stage again were well organised. The pyro effects were excellently timed and operated.

LIGHTING – I noted the Rig was simple but I admired the effective use of colour and the use of robo ‘sunburst’ lamps SL and SR – they added greatly to the lighting effects. The use of red for the Demon and Blue for the Fairy was perfect, and the bright overall sunlight effect for outdoor scenes was again perfect. I appreciated the lighting effects for solo songs – the dimming and green sunburst effect for Princess first song, and we had blue for ‘A Whole New World’. The Robo spots moving for ‘Can You Feel the Love’ with soft red overall lighting. Use of red and blue for ‘Big Spender’ again looked excellent. The lighting in the Cave scene was very good with dimming and then pink sunburst and use of the Glitter Ball for the Ballet. The use of the Follow Spot was effective throughout. Well designed and operated Lighting plot.

SOUND – Both the live and recorded sound effects were good and well cued. Sound effect for Washing machine was effective and the effects made by the Drummer were also very good and well timed. Again a fine technical input.

COSTUME & MAKE-UP – These were first class. First of all the Dame costumes were immaculate and with a good variety of changes of both costume and Wigs and Accessories – the Dame must look outrageous at all times – and this Dame did complete with the excellent OTT make-up. The opening chorus had effective red and yellow Chinese style costumes. Both the Demon and Fairy Queen looked excellent both with make-up and costume and I particularly liked the Demon’s top hat with horns. Yoo-Hoo and Wishy Washy in traditional outfits, Emperor in traditional robes and headdress and with a good make-up complete with moustache, *Although the styling of costume was good for both Aladdin and Princess, I was put off by the lack of neat hairstyling for both, and lack of headdress particularly for the Princess - Aladdin could have been given extra height with a Chinese hat and the Princess should have had her hair off her face and with an exotic headdress.* Abanazer looked excellent in his flowing robes, Mutt again in good style as a traditional Guard. The Spirit of the Ring was lovely in her whacky modern Tutu, and Genie again in fine sparkling style. Dodo had a lovely crisp Edwardian style costume although it did appear to be slightly out of context with the rest of the Oriental theme. The chorus looked excellent at all times, and the overall costuming was colourful, well designed and constructed, and again adding greatly to the excellent visuals of this Pantomime.

MUSIC

ORCHESTRA – The musical combination was perfect for the small venue and intimate Pantomime. I did feel the overall pace was a little slow and pedantic and songs could have been given a livelier backing. The input of the individual musicians was very good and the underscoring was well managed and effective.

SINGING – It is difficult with an all female and a very young Chorus to have a strong vocality, but the young performers did project with clarity. ‘Whistle While you Work’ with Dame, Aladdin, Wishy Washy and Yoo-Hoo, was projected with a strong input from

the Dame. Princess with 'Some Day Soon' pitched the lower register well but was a little insecure with the higher, but projected with a sweet quality vocality. 'A Whole New World' with Aladdin and Princess was given a strong input by Aladdin although again insecurity with higher notes but the song given a good characterisation with gesture. In 'China Town' again the singing input of the chorus was a little weak, but 'Big Spender' with Dame was excellently characterised and projected. Aladdin with 'Dreaming of You' song put it over with feeling and character.

In Act 2 the opening number was a little weak from vocal projection but the 'Money...in a Rich Man's World' came over with sparkle and pace. The Dame and chorus with 'I'm going to wash that Man right out of my Hair' was good with strong input from all. The singing input did lack some energy and lively pace but I think this was due to youth and insecurity, but the songs were well characterised.

DIRECTION

The Direction was secure with the characterisation and with all the technical input and co-ordination, but the overall pace was slow and even. This was not a lively Pantomime script and lacked strong quick-fire jokes and slapstick humour, and many of the traditional elements of 'Aladdin' were missing – for instance the two 'police' characters who add a lot of slapstick comedy and chase scenes. The plot was diluted with the odd addition of a Fairy Queen and Demon characters who took the magic and concentrated importance away from Genie and Abanazer. In this script the Dame did not have any in depth and joke filled, long, complaining, speeches aimed intimately to the audience. I truly think the Company and especially the Dame deserved a stronger and more traditional vehicle for their abilities. This was a visually excellent Pantomime but it lacked slick slapstick and comedy routines. I have noticed with my work this year that many Companies are short of a strong male vocal input into the chorus singing and there is a lot of reliance on young female singers, who although enjoying an excellent experience are not being backed with vocal strength – perhaps a remedy for this would be to make recordings with male input and then play them under the live singing to enhance the chorus work. The dance input of the young chorus was excellent and full of energy and great promise for the future.

MOVEMENT & DANCE

CHOREOGRAPHY including DANCE SKILLS & GROUPING – The choreography was very good with super pictures at the end of numbers, and the technical input of the young performers was of a high standard. The Jewel Ballet was excellent and made a lovely ending to the first Act. The dance routine in the Laundry scene was good but an opportunity missed by not using a real line of laundry and incorporating the clothes into a dance, but good loud replies by the young dancers to the Dame. The grouping for the routines were very good but I felt that when standing around on stage in a scene the grouping of the young performers could have been more imaginative and relaxed with

gossipy groups. The solo songs had simple but effective movement routines. A good standard of dance input.

OVERALL ACHIEVEMENT

This was a fine achievement with to my mind, a weakscript which did not give many opportunities for fast pace and slapstick. The capabilities of the Company and especially that of the Dame would have been fully realised if more business and fast jokes could have been realised. The Pantomime looked colourful with super Costumes and Sets, but the overall pace was a little slow. The input of the young performers was impressive particularly with the dance and attractive stage presence, and as a Community production this show worked well and was very successful involving all age groups.

Thank you for your kind hospitality and I look forward to visiting the Hanham Players at some time in the near future.