

NATIONAL OPERATIC AND DRAMATIC ASSOCIATION LONDON REGION

Society ; Starmaker
Production ; *'BEAUTY AND THE BEAST'*
Date ; Tuesday 1st March 2011
Venue ; The Wilde Theatre, Bracknell
Report by ; Henry Hawes - NODA Representative - Area 13

'Beauty and the Beast' is a wonderful Disney Fantasy which has stood the test of time over many years. Until recently it had been performed as a play, and still is. Then an animated film was made which captured the public's imagination so that the Disney Empire turned it into a full stage musical. This show contains all the elements of true theatre, magnificent sets, outstanding and outrageous costumes, a host of wonderful characters together with a good story line and tuneful music.

On Tuesday 1st March 2011, I attended the opening night at the Wilde Theatre to review Starmaker's production of 'Beauty and the Beast'. This was an outstanding production by this young group and was a most enjoyable evenings entertainment. The principals displayed an acting ability beyond their young years and ably supported by an excellent chorus, all contained in an array of impressive sets.

Josh McGrohan - (THE BEAST) - This is a difficult role to take on but Josh did it full justice. As the 'Beast' you lose the chance of using facial expressions and have to rely on body language and your vocal ability to portray the various emotions, and this you did extremelly well. The anger displayed on the position you found yourself in, to your eventual love for 'Belle' was of a very high order. Your singing voice was excellent and in particular the number in the first act finale 'If I Can't Love Her' brought out all the emotion of a tormented soul - A great performance and the best portrayal of the 'Beast' I have seen so far.

Josh Gwilt - (LUMIERE) - This was another Disney-ish character attired in an outstanding costume and make-up together with two working, flame effect torches held in each hand in a candleabra mode. Josh certainly entered into the spirit of the character which must have been tiring holding the position required. Here we had a good voice characterisation with good diction and projection - Well done.

Tom Longhurst - (LEFOU) - As the side-kick of 'Gaston', Tom was subjected to numerous assault's by 'Gaston', all of which was timed to perfection, looking very realistic. Tom's facial expressions were hilarious. This was comedy at its finest - Well done.

Alex Jennings - (BABETTE) - What a lovely, flirtacious 'French Maid' Alex made of her. Her movements could not be faulted with a well maintained French accent throughout the performance, all aided by a first-class costume.

Jonny Slevin - (GASTON) - Jonny made the most of this part presenting a character who was full of his own importance and who was not particularly well liked and eventually comes unstuck! His bragging could not have been bettered and his rapport with 'Lefou' was a joy to watch. Jonny was another member who presented a singing voice of power and control - A great characterisation.

Beth Wright - (Mrs POTTS) - To move around the stage dressed as a teapot with one arm permanently extended as a teapot spout and at the same time wheel a trolley with one hand must have been difficult in the extreme, but you made it look easy. This was a lovely characterisation, dispensing tea to all and sundry. A well sung 'Beauty and the Beast' - Well done

Robyn Smith - (BELLE) - This young lady exhibited an acting ability far in excess of her young years. Her initial abhorrence towards the 'Beast', to her eventual love for him was all beautifully portrayed. This young lady has an enormous talent in her acting ability and her vocal quality. Her singing in her various numbers was a joy to listen too and in particular her number with her father 'No Matter What' - Congratulations.

Nick Woodford - (COGSWORTH) - A walking, talking, singing clock, where else would you see such a character outside of a Disney musical?. Nick's costume of a clock with moving pendulum was incredible and I would imagine it could be restricting in your movements, but Nick developed an excellent character - No easy task - Congratulations.

Callum Hopcutt - (CHIP) - This was not an easy part to play being encased in a tea trolley with just your face showing, the rest of your head being encased in a teacup, but you played this part very well with good facial expressions and voice projection - Well done.

Emily Smith - (SILLY GIRL 1)

Gabriella Harris - (SILLY GIRL 2)

Jess Longhurst - (SILLY GIRL 3) - These three played their 'Silly Girl' characters spot-on and maintained them throughout the performance. They flitted about the stage as if joined together. Here we had good diction and projection so that every word could be heard. Not easy characters to sustain I would imagine - So well done to all three of you.

Max Jefcut - (D'ARQUE) - As the villain of the piece Max emanated an air of menace whenever he appeared. His costume together with his body language certainly emphasised his evilness - A well crafted character.

Rachel Warwick-Clarke - (WARDROBE) - This was a great portrayal by Rachel of a wardrobe complete with practical doors and it must have been difficult and uncomfortable moving around in that type of costume, but you carried it off very well - Well done.

Malcolm Wellard - (MAURICE) - This was the only adult member in the cast and who played the inventor father of 'Belle'. Malcolm was excellent, this seasoned performer gave this character a life of his own displaying all the eccentricity called for in the part. His feelings towards his daughter 'Belle' was beautifully portrayed and vocally, his duet with her 'No Matter What' could not have been bettered - A great performance.

Barnaby Boulton - (BAKER)

Sam Jacob - (BOOK SELLER) - These two minor roles were well filled by Barnaby and Sam, both entering into the spirit of the production.

Dancers

Shannon Law, Chani Neate, Kerrie Dobie, Naomi Doran, Kate Wayman - These five dancers performed beautifully, interpreting Jill's routines with precision and gracefulness - Congratulations.

Chorus Beauty Cast

Jack Jennings, Matt Hughes, Hollie Watts, Ashleigh Payne, Nathan Isaacs, Jacob Smith, Tara Bartlett, Eric Haxhilari, Adri Mbugua, Emily Grigoleit, Sophie Taylor, Amelia Rodney, Austin Grigoleit, Nicolle York, Caitlin Smart, Frances Whitehead, Connie Wheeler, Florence Townsend - This chorus was first rate, their movement about the stage area was precise with everybody appearing to know where they were going. Vocally they made an excellent sound in the various chorus numbers with a good balance of voices and volume - Well done.

Choir Beauty Cast

Danielle Ellenby, David Wallace, Sam Tait, Hannah Prosser, Elysia Carroll, Libby Sinclair, Ollie Kyte, Ashley Wilson - I assume that this group did not appear on stage but lent their voices to enhance the chorus numbers onstage. If that is the case then take a bow because you must have enhanced the excellent sound that was generated.

Jill Morgan - (DIRECTOR / CHOREOGRAPHER) - I could not fault the direction of this show by Jill, she brought out some fine characterisations among the principals who had all been well cast. The positioning on stage was good ensuring the stage was well balanced throughout the performance. Chorus movement had been well devised so that at no time did the stage look congested. The choreographic routine for the dancers were well executed being precise and attractive fitting the storyline well. The large routine involving knives, forks, spoons etc; filled the Wilde Theatre stage but choreographically it was very ragged, whether it was first night nerves or under rehearsed, I am not sure.

Andy Milburn - (MUSICAL DIRECTOR) - Andy had gathered together 13 fine musicians who played the music with a good tempo and balance of instruments, making an excellent sound and which was sympathetic to the performers. The cast had been

well rehearsed in the music with confident singing by the principals and a good balance of voices in the chorus numbers - Nice one Andy.

Production Manager / Stage Manager & Crew - This team worked hard during the performance with swift and silent scene changes, no easy task with some of the heavy scenery and it certainly appeared a well managed stage.

Lighting Design & Operation - This was a good lighting plot which ensured the right atmosphere was generated in the various scenes, they were also well controlled - Well done.

Sound - Bearing in mind I attended the first night, I felt the sound was a little on the heavy side but this probably improved during the week. I also noticed a couple of late sound cues on the night of my visit.

Properties - All the properties looked good on stage, they appeared authentic and made the necessary impression.

Scenery - by Scenic Projects - This was an impressive set of scenery involving travellers, gauzes and large trucked units resulting in it having a dramatic impact which certainly enhanced a spectacular production.

Costumes - My Congratulations to Glynis Smith and her team who devised and made the impressive set of costumes, all in the Disney mould. It must have been an incredible task to make all those costumes.

Make-up - All the make-up's had been well thought out and applied and looked authentic under the strong stage lights.

Programme - An excellent programme with an eye-catching cover and containing a wealth of information, well laid out. Cast photographs had been well reproduced, all printed on good quality paper. I will be submitting this programme for the NODA Programme Competition.

Front of House - Starmaker still retain the high standard one has come to expect from the Front of House staff - Keep up the good work.

Thank you for your invitation to review your latest production '*Beauty and the Beast*'. For a first night it was a great performance and must have been a 'cracker' by the last night. I think this will rank as one of your better productions and I congratulate all the cast for a superb evenings entertainment. I look forward to your next production and wish you all success with it.

Henry

NODA Representative - London Region - Area 13.