

## **Aladdin 2018 Review**

I know pantomime has its critics but for me it is a theatrical art form as valid as any other. It is often a child's first introduction to the theatre and, as such, should be treated with respect. And as far as I am concerned, Aladdin is by far the best choice of the many offerings during panto season. The exotic locations, a cast full of magical characters and a story as old as time – Aladdin has it all. Bramley Parish Theatre Players chose well and a stage teeming with enthusiastic performers rose to the pantomime challenge.

There are two good indications of a good pantomime – firstly, that the audience are enjoying themselves and joining in with everything that is going on and secondly, that the cast are having fun. Bramley certainly delivered on both of those. Dean Patrick, the Director, has been involved with the Society since he was a child and for the first time stepped up to take charge, and what a successful job he made of it. How he achieved what he did on a small stage (& budget?) I will never know. He wrung every ounce of comedy and magic out of his cast. Dean is certainly a Director to watch in the future – already he is in demand around the region.

The comedy was led by the outrageous Widow Twankey (Gary Holmes), who even managed to get laughs out of taking a prompt and Wishee Washee (Joe Smith), a young man with great comedy timing. The love interest of Aladdin (Kristina Fielding) and Princess Yasmin (Emma Whitehead) made a delightful couple with an excellent rapport, strong vocals and were a joy to watch. Abanazer (Jeff Allman) had the audience booing before he had even spoken a word – what more could you want from a pantomime baddie – perhaps it might have been better to not attempt an accent because they are always difficult to sustain. And, I guess that was why we were treated to a broad Yorkshire Empress of China (Carolynn Dickinson) – her bombastic approach to the character certainly created a memorable cameo. We were also treated to a very glamorous Genie (Nicky Knightley), with a good line in comic asides. Able support was provided by Slave of the Ring (Holly Smith), PCs Ping & Pong (Sarah Coulson & Linda Chippendale), So-shy (Yasmin Stevenson), Prime Minister (Toby Coke) and a well-drilled ensemble of adults and children.

Congratulations to the Musical Director (Robyn Saunders) on her debut – there was a varied collection of songs ranging from the classics - “Happy Days are Here Again” through to Bruno Mars.

Choreography was simple but effective and everybody was in step !

There were some beautiful costumes on stage – the programme credits the Wardrobe Team, but not the source of the costumes (Dress Circle of York deserve to be mentioned?)

It is a universal truth that Societies such as Bramley are successful due to the off stage support and teamwork of so many people. Stage Crew, Wardrobe, Props/scenic design, programme design and a host of others bring their expertise and help to get the production on to the stage. They too deserve their round of applause.

Thank you Bramley for your hospitality and I wish you every success in the future.

Review by Bryan Craven of NODA