

# Jack and the Beanstalk 2023

There are three things that any production of Jack and the Beanstalk have to get right – the cow, the giant and the beanstalk itself. I have to say that Bramley Parish. Theatre Players absolutely nailed all three - with the biggest walking, talking giant I have ever seen, operated by Trevor Smith, the cutest lovable cow (Emma Smith and Richard Edwards) and a beanstalk that grew to the full height of the stage. Stunning!

When BPTP had to move out of their church hall venue and into the much larger “real theatre” at Leeds West Academy, it was a massive challenge – everything had to be bigger, better and brighter. Under the direction of Dean Patrick, they have certainly achieved all of that – sold out audiences for the run of the pantomime are testament to the popularity of their shows. Dean understands theatre in general and pantomime in particular – it has to be magical to capture the imagination of the audience and, in particular, children who may have never seen a live show before.

There was a strong line up of principals, with some very experienced performers from around the region. Returning for his second stint as Dame, James Creegan, was the epitome of a pantomime Dame as Dotty Dimple. He had a great sense of humour and a natural ability to interact with the audience, delivering the essential over the top sparkle as a Dame should do. Joe Smith, as Simple Simon, has developed his skills over the years to give him a natural stage presence who drew the audience in each time he appeared on stage. Great comic ability and enthusiasm. Emma Greenwood, another Bramley regular, delivered a confident performance as Simon’s brother, Jack. She looked and acted every inch the Principal Boy, with a strong singing voice to match. Playing the Principal Girl, Princess Charlotte, was Katie Jones who worked well with Emma, great interaction and a convincing performance again vocally. Fairy Sugardust, was elegantly played by Tina Edwards, whose role was to narrate the story. This was a believable performance from Tina and she handled the rhyming dialogue exceptionally well. And, of course, for every good fairy, there has to be an evil opposite number – Emma Whitehead was nicely evil as Picallilli, great characterisation and facial expressions. Her every appearance elicited the appropriate boos from the audience. She was ably assisted by John Kitching, a stalwart of amateur theatre, as Rancid, the rat catcher. A strong character actor, John made the part his own.

The comic duo was played by Angie Cordingley as Snatchet and Rachel Emsley as Scarper. There was excellent interaction between these two performers who delivered confident performances. The “For Sale” routine was hilarious, as the laughter from the audience showed. King Crumble and Queen Apricot were the overbearing and overprotective

parents of Princess Charlotte. These were undertaken to good effect by the talented and effervescent Amanda Don and Sue Law. Supporting them was their Royal Equerry, Liam Edwards, a young man with great potential.

No show is complete without a strong chorus in this case the villagers/dancers all of whom supported and ensured that this pantomime was delivered professionally. I was also impressed with the pictures created by the chorus – groups of children watching Punch and Judy, people buying ice creams etc.

The show was visually stunning – some fabulous, well fitting, professional standard costumes, courtesy of your wardrobe team, Rachel Emsley, Sue Law and Ruth Ritchie (wonderful colour coordinated finale); lighting and sound were spot on – every moo or slap was timed to perfection. Well done Alfie Doran, Tom Waters and CS Technical. Often overlooked, but the makeup was stunning, thanks to Geneve Smith. The team behind the props and set for Jack and the Beanstalk have a lot of challenges, and they delivered them with skill and imagination. Thanks to the team – Sue Law, Hannah Birch and Claire Collins. And let's not forget the backstage team who worked tirelessly, efficiently (& quietly!) all night, under the direction of the Stage Manager, Trevor Smith, and his deputy, Andrew Rowney, - Richard Edwards, Richard Everton and Isabel Smith.

Musical choice (Wil Jones & Joe Smith) was very good and suited the story perfectly and the choreography (Dean Patrick) was matched to the abilities of the company and was neat and well thought through. The backing tracks, courtesy of Wil and Joe, recorded especially for the show rather than "Off the shelf" tracks were an excellent alternative to a live band.

Dean, his assistant Director, Linda Birch and the Production Assistant, Emma Smith, should be very proud of this production and what they have achieved at Bramley, in general.

Hard work and team work pay off and it's so good to see that traditional pantomimes are as popular as ever - great entertainment and well delivered, congratulations to everyone on a superb performance and I can't wait to see you all again next year.

Bryan Craven District NODA representative