

Review by Leigh Conley NODA SW Regional Representative, District 8.

First of all I must take my hat off to Matthew Maisey and can only guess that he must hate having time off over Christmas! Why else would anyone choose to write; direct and star in a Panto that starts with a dress rehearsal on Boxing Day! However hard the task may have been Super Matthew was obviously up for the challenge and the whole production seemed to come together very well.

I noticed from the programme that you hired costumes and scenery and this proved to be a good decision. The scenes were laid out using back cloths and props and looked good and helped set the scenes well, which highlight the fact that simple done well can be very effective. Although bearing in mind the simplicity of the sets, there were a few scene changes that seemed to take a little too long, most notably was the change from 'Nelly's First Aid Room' to 'Elsewhere in the Palace', which looked like it would have benefitted from bringing the curtain down and then clearing the stage, instead of the other way round.

Costumes were also hired in (well some at least) and, again, these looked very effective, especially the walk down outfits; the prince's outfits and the queens outfits, although it would have been nice to see Nurse Nelly in a few more glamorous costumes.

The lighting by Bright Production Services was good and worked well throughout the production.

The sound quality by Dave Riley and Northern Lights Productions was also good and there were no obvious mic problems or feedback, something that I have witnessed in other productions this year.

The band, under the musical direction of Tom Billing, was also very good and it was a sure sign of their quality that it was hard to tell if it was the live band or a backing track playing. The comedic musical touches added by Tom and the band were great and added to the production well. Unfortunately some of the songs were slowed down and this meant they lost a bit of their impact, most notably 'Bills' which did not suit being played slowly.

Super Matthew's writing was good and showed a clear leaning towards old school style comedy. Unfortunately, the first act was a little slow paced but did finish in spectacular form with the incredibly funny Wood Scene/"Yours" song, which had me crying with laughter. The first act closed with the introduction of the seven dwarfs who showed what an amazing talented crop of youngsters GSMCS has and what a bright future the club surely has. All of the dwarfs/children were a real credit to your society and it seems unfair to single any out for special praise but Rhys Anderson definitely embodied his character of Cranky incredibly well (I hope he was acting!) and how cute was Elsie May-Govier as Dozey, of course the night I came to see the production, you were using Team A but based on their talent I am sure Team B were just as good. However, apparently, GSMCS are a little bit selfish and not only do you have enough talented youngsters to produce fourteen dwarfs, you also have enough talent to produce two sets of youth dancers; two sets of intermediate chorus and two sets of junior chorus!!!! All of whom did you proud, as did your three dancers and your adult chorus (how many people were in this production????).

Particularly impressive were the youngsters in "Somewhere Out There" and the dance routines in "Poison Ivy" and "He's a Pirate" and hats off to Sarah Neale whose choreography was exceptional throughout the whole show. If it isn't enough that you guys have so many talented youngsters you also have adult talent too! All of the main players played their parts well and the comedy pairing of Super Matthew Maisey as Weasel and Justin Hodge as Ratfink was definitely a highlight as was the singing of Niamh Small and Jessy Stradling as Snow White and The Queen.

Amelia Chinnock-Schumann showed she has an exceptional stage presence in the role of Molly Muddles, but her constant over hamming and larger than life reactions became irritating after a

while, which was a shame because as mentioned she clearly has an amazing gift for performing which could be seen in the lovely way she dealt with the children from the audience. It was also lovely to see Katie Spraggon in her role as Nurse Nelly's Assistant; she was definitely a crowd pleaser. One thing that did come across strongly was a sense of teamwork and all of the main players; chorus members and youngsters all worked together incredibly well and it was obvious that everyone was having fun. This was evident on many occasions but most notably when you could see the cast were having adlibbed hi-jinks, the best of which was when Jessy pulled out Matthew's nose tissues. I am a big fan of silly moments like this as it shows you guys having a good time, and if you are having a good time then so will the audience.

I was particularly impressed that you were selling your own merchandise (£1 badges) a really effective idea that I am not ashamed to admit I will be stealing for future productions. I also loved the fact that the whole cast came out to greet the audience as they left, I felt this was a really nice touch and a very lovely idea and am sorry that I didn't have time to stop and chat.

Overall I had an enjoyable evening and, again, would like to congratulate Super Matthew; Laura; Sarah; Tom and Vocal Tutor Elspeth Salmon for bringing the whole thing together, so well, over the Christmas period. I am sure that this was not an easy thing to do, so well done and I look forward to visiting you again soon.