

BLODS

Shrek the Musical

De la Warr Pavilion Bexhill

Thursday 23rd December pm 2021

Director: Kitson Wellard

Asst. Director: Steve Pickering

MD: Matthew Lewis

Choreographers: Sophia Lefevre-White assisted by Maya Godlonton-White

We at NODA say, 'be inspired by amateur theatre' and certainly this production of Shrek the musical inspired all of us, the very large audience. Even the balcony was open, and I don't remember this happening for a long time.

The scene was set by a young lady, Florence Wellard who waited patiently to set off as a Young Shrek leaving for a journey of loneliness, who grows over time to become a large Ogre in his swamp. Gareth Brighton as Shrek, taking on a Scottish accent gave a compassionate performance that I completely fell in love with - carrying a large body costume and an amazing prosthetic green face and shoulder molding, taking Celina Zomer make-up artist some considerable time to perfect. Suddenly, fairyland characters now expelled from Lord Farquaad's kingdom arrive in his domain, much to his annoyance. He sets off to complain and accidentally assists a speaking Donkey who insists on accompanying him. Meanwhile in the castle Gingy, the talking gingerbread man is being tortured ! **Gingy tells Lord F where to find a princess to marry and reach his goal as a king! This then transitions the lovely Fiona in her castle tower.** We see three stages of Fiona's life – as a young girl confidently played by Helena Zomer/Freya Johnson, with Harley Loft as Teen Fiona and as a mature Princess - characterised superbly by Jessica Wellard both in her singing, action, and dance, as she waits patiently for someone who truly loves her to reverse her wretched curse. As Shrek and Donkey arrive in Duloc Farquaad demands Shrek rescue the maiden and promises if he succeeds to give him back his swamp. Along the way fast talking full of energy, comic timing Abby Baines as Donkey meets a large female Dragon and Shrek rescues Fiona. Shrek is now falling for the Princess, but he overhears a conversation that is misinterpreted so takes her to Lord F, where she reluctantly agrees to marry the diminished figure wonderfully played on his knees by versatile Dean Charlton, who even at one point entered on a full-sized plastic horse which exited off stage using reversing bleeps! Very funny. The wedding is about to conclude and Shrek in the nick of time, shyly expresses his love and everyone except Lord F of course lives happily ever after. Ah.

There are too many talents to mention, as well known fairy-tale characters, which were named. All had fantastic individual costumes with good footwear and appropriate makeup prepared by the big wardrobe team headed by Sam Lewis & **Sophia Lefevre**. They told their stories in movement and credit to you all for such good interpretations. Wonderful additional props added to the appeal. There were nine named dancers too, with cameos and colourful costumes to match. The only hired in costumes were for Shrek himself, Donkey and Lord F. which will be

returned after the production. There were rats, skeletons, guards and a cross dresser wolf and many more adding to the spectacle.

Scenic Projects of Suffolk provided the difficult and large sets which were proficiently managed by the backstage crew with BLODS SM Amanda Charlesworth plus some surprising moving effects including a huge singing Dragon voiced (**by Kitson Wellard understudying for Danielle Taylor**) with colourful red fire bursts. Atmospheric lighting throughout, sound cues perfectly timed including some very loud farts and belching which of course the audience loved – a real bit of panto! Sound levels were balanced, and it was interesting having extra staging built around the band for reaching into the audience.

Maisie Weston produced a great Souvenir Programme, and this will most certainly be put forward for consideration in the NODA Programme & Poster competition. Thoughtful, full of interest including something for the little ones, NODA benefits, Lily Pad wishes and advertising support, stylish printing, and good photography. A really first class read.

The cleverly written twenty odd Musical numbers under the leadership of Mattew **Lewis** with his band were strong with articulate lyrics. Good dance routines and general ensemble work was well executed, including an always enjoyable tap, created by Sophia and Maya (who also played a cheeky Pinocchio). An electric climax finale ended a memorable evening of much energy and buzz.

Despite all the trials and tribulations and the time scale Kitson as Director, with Steve Pickering, a stalwart Asst. Director managed to pull off an exceptional piece of theatre to an exceedingly high standard and I congratulate everyone that was involved along the long road. A great start to everyone's Christmas. Thank you BLODS.

A précised version will be posted on the NODA website for the company very soon, for all to see.

Anne Lawson
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SE District 3