

## **PROMENADE PRODUCTIONS**

**Dick Whittington  
By Alan Frayn**

**Cheltenham Playhouse**

**February 3<sup>rd</sup> 2022**

***Director & Choreographer: Ceri Winrow***

***MD: Dave Whittle***

This was the first time this company had performed a Pantomime in this intimate venue, and the first time the Theatre had hosted a Pantomime in many a long year.

It had all the elements of a family pantomime, good sets; lovely well chosen songs; colourful costumes; some comedy scenes; a love story; a dame, a community song, lots of audience participation, good verses evil; a happy ending.

It started with a prologue, which set the scene between Fairy Bowbells and King Rat. We were then transported to the streets of London with a lively chorus number. This scene had a well-painted street scene backcloth and a sign for Alderman Fitzwarren's shop.

All the backcloths and scenery were well painted, and there were insets against black cloths for smaller scenes allowing set changing behind. The seascape with barrels in front gave the impression of a harbour side and then later boards and a ships wheel were added to take us on board the ship, it all worked well. The lighting had been well designed and helped create the right atmosphere for each scene, brightness for the outside scenes, which contrasted with indoor lighting. King Rat's sewer scene was suitably dark, and the scenes with Fairy Bowbells and King Rat were well lit giving a feeling of menace trying to subdue virtue. The sound effects were all well sourced and cued and added to the lighting to help create the sewers and the storm scenes. Mostly the microphones were well cued and the sound levels were good.

All the costumes fitted well and mostly looked good on stage, with Fairy Bowbells and King Rat having a more modern take. The sets of chorus costumes were all appropriate for the songs and everyone looked very smart in their sailor's outfits. In the scene in the Sultan's Palace they were suitably colourful and exotic. The set of costumes after the shipwreck were beautifully tattered. The principals costumes suited the characters, as did all makeup and hairstyles.

There was an interesting choice of songs, which had been well taught by Musical Director Dave Whittle and were well sung. They were suitably short for a Pantomime with nice solos, duets and ensemble numbers. The choreography was suited to the music and ability of the cast. I particularly liked the opening of Act 2, the combination of song and dance got the second half off to a rousing start.

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### **National Operatic and Dramatic Association**

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## **Characters**

King Rat was suitably dark and evil, especially with Rat out of Hell

Fairy Bowbells exuded sweetness and light, they worked well together

Alice Fitzwarren was a dutiful daughter, with a mind of her own and had some nice duets with Dick.

Mike Fitch did an excellent job as Dame Dolly Dumpling, this was his first time on stage and he brought out the fun and innuendo of the role.

Idle Jack, her son, was a larger than life clown of a character, who engaged well with the audience trying to get them to shout out 'Pull your socks up Jack each time he came on stage' and leading the communal song. He was fun.

Captain Cuttlefish, who captained Alderman Fitzwarren's ship, seemed to have to spend most of his time trying to keep his second mate in order, and was a good 'straight man' to Scupper's nonsense.

Scupper the ship's mate was a comic character always full of fun, making jokes and never being serious.

The role of Dick Whittington was played by a principal boy, and was an ambitious character, who does not give up easily, and who falls in love with Alice. They worked well together and had lovely duets.

Director Ceri Winrow had encouraged her cast to approach the show with energy and enthusiasm, which they did, and although there were several prompts given the evening I was there it did not interrupt the flow. She had also made sure that the large number of very silly jokes were all well emphasised and that the audience was given time to respond.

This was a real team effort with everyone working together, especially on the technical side as the 'lighting man' had tested positive for covid and been replaced at the last minute. Well done everyone for a fun filled evening.

## ***Frankie Telford*** ***Regional Representative District 15 South West Region***

*Any observation made by the reviewer can only be based on what he sees at the performance in question and that the observations made will prove helpful in improving future productions. The reviewer may have received information in advance of the performance and it is inevitable that his assessment will be affected by that knowledge.*

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