The Woodfield Entertainers

**Puss in Boots**

By Damian Trasler, David Lovesy & Steve Clark

Ashtead Peace Memorial Hall

Directed by Mell Schmidt

*Thursday 13th December, 2012*

This year's pantomime 'Puss in Boots' opened with great gusto with the first of many appearances by the narrator, James Close. He narrated with excellent diction, communication and sincerity throughout the pantomime. The hero of the tale, Jack, played by Denise Hillier took the baton, giving us a solid portrayal of her character. The arrival of Puss, played by Hannah Chapman started the journey of make-believe with her natural and energised feline persona. The pantomime dame, Hettie Quette, played by Neil Edwards, managed to combine the absurdity of the character with a plausible persona, sharp humour and good delivery of lines. Princess Alice, played by Cara Turner, worked hard to make her character believable, but could have been more effective if she had stayed in character a little more and played her role straight. The arrival of Queen Mildred and king Herbert was wonderfully humorous and I enjoyed the teamwork they displayed. Queen Mildred (Elaine Denny), was suitably bossy with great humour and King Hebert showed good stature while delivering her lines confidently. The arrival of Lord Roger played by Simon Gadd brought the appropriate boos and hisses. He displayed many of the qualities needed to be a panto baddie, however, greater attention needs to be placed on physicality, appropriate gestures and the execution of moves with purpose. Be careful of repeated generic hand gestures.

The pairing of Jenny Gamache (Nosmo) and Sara Brammall (Nopar) worked very successfully. They gave us some hearty laughs with their dialogue and even more with their musical numbers. Just try to avoid too many in jokes with certain members of the audience!

Throughout the panto, the chorus supported the cast with secure and effective scenes, exuding confidence in all of their musical numbers.

The set was effective and beautifully painted. This was enhanced by the excellent costumes and make up used throughout.

As director, Mel Schmidt had clearly put in a lot of hard work. Most of the musical numbers had good choreography, but at times, certain principals needed more direction to avoid resting too heavily on improvisation. Some of the more awkward moments could have been avoided with further rehearsal which needed to focus on the slickness of the dialogue and each principal's physical ownership of the stage.

On balance, a highly entertaining evening.

Bee Cassidy Mmus NODA Rep.