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Production: **The Wizard Of Oz**
Company: The Woodfield Entertainers
Venue: Ashted Peace Memorial Hall
Date of Review: Friday 14 December 2007

This was my first experience of The Woodfield Entertainers and I came away being thoroughly entertained by your pantomime version of The Wizard Of Oz.

The story, of course, is time honoured and whilst the copyright issues prevented the original music being used - it did allow you to hand pick a selection of suitable songs to both complement the story and provide a festive panto feel.

As soon as the curtain went back I was impressed with the efforts made with the set - which looked colourful and clearly a lot of hard work had gone into its construction. Many congratulations to Melanie Schmidt for her design work and the considerable team of named helpers in the programme. The stage area at the Peace Memorial Hall is quite a unique shape in that the height is quite restrictive compared to the width of the stage - so you did well to get a set that looked so effective. The use of the rostra and treads at the front allowed you a few more options which were suitably exploited throughout the show.

The show started with Get Happy which probably needed a little more collective energy at the beginning but it did build as the number went on.

The choice of Any Dream Will Do from Joseph was a good number for Dorothy and the kids who combined to sing it well but there was a small issue of focus with the kids during this number. I enjoyed the subtle changes of lyrics during the various numbers "I wore my shoes" being the example here !

I was very impressed with Billie Duchesne's portrayal of Dorothy. She worked very hard at developing her character and demonstrated good stage presence throughout, with some good acting skills and strong singing throughout. Well done.

Charlotte Tatham-Thompson also gave an excellent performance as the Nice Witch Of The North. She was well cast in this role and her duet of Can You Feel The Love Tonight with Dorothy was a musical highlight of the whole show.

Dorothy's three friends the scarecrow, tin man and lion were all well acted by Neil Edwards, Elaine Denny and Judy Abbott respectively. They also all looked great in their costumes (in fact the whole show was well costumed) - again many congratulations to Melanie and the cast for their efforts in this area.

Neil gave an excellent performance as the scarecrow - well acted with good physical movement and strong projection. Judy made the most of the cowardly side to the Lion and Elaine was a friendly tin man.

All three worked well together and combined with Dorothy for an excellent rendition of Ease On Down The Road in front of the tabs.

Stephy Camp succeeded in getting plenty of boos from the audience as the Wicked Witch Of The West - so job well done there and again was well costumed.

The poppy scene was very well done with nice props.

Wobin, sorry Robin Herd did very well as the Guardian of The Gates - good acting and made his character totally believable. Joy Duchesne gave a fun performance as the Mayor Of The Munchkins.

There were later appearances from Loraine Ratcliff as Glinda and James Close who made a very credible Wizard Of Oz.

Strictly Come Dancing was a nice topical insertion into Act 2 and Holding Out For A Hero was very funny, the show ended on a high with We Go Together from Grease.

Whilst I fully understand the reasons why backing tracks are used - the most important thing with them is to make sure the cues are as seamless as possible and the overall balance of sound is good. Your sound team achieved this.

Lighting was very effectively produced by both Marc Thomas and Richard Pike - especially the green in the Emerald City scenes.

The programme was nicely designed by Alison Kiddell and contained all the requisite information - the Word Search being a nice addition.

Congratulations to you all on your production which was thoroughly enjoyed by the capacity audience.

Clearly a big team was responsible for the success of the production but it would be wrong in closing not to congratulate your director and producer Melanie for all her hard work in many assorted roles to produce such a great nights entertainment which came across as well rehearsed and I didn't hear the prompt once !

Thanks for the invitation and the kind hospitality shown on the evening. Good luck with your scheduled revue show in May which I look forward to seeing.

Best Wishes

David Stewart
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