



Meopham Players Newsletter

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February 2017/ issue 29



The Magic Dolls reboot a big hit



Brenda Ogden

Our Guest Reviewer was enchanted by the good clean fun of this traditional panto with a familiar cast of heroes and villains

January can be a pretty miserable month: Christmas is over, the weather is horrible - cold, dark and depressing - and most people feel in need of being cheered up.

Well, they certainly got that at the joint Meopham Players and New Ash Green Act 1 pantomime last week. "The Magic Dolls" was a re-write of the original pantomime written by Dickie Kagan and Henry Roberts. As all the youngsters who took part in the original production have grown up and moved on, the children's scenes, always such a hit with audiences, had to be removed and sections of the pantomime re-written and I think that some anxiety was felt that this could make a major difference

to its impact on a newer audience. There was also the added dimension of two amateur dramatic societies who had never worked together before pulling off all the intricacies of a traditional pantomime. Well.....it worked, wonderfully.

All the standard characters were there - the gormless henchmen, You and Me, the thoroughly wicked villain, the beautiful princess, the handsome prince, the imposing queen and the dowager, the constantly-muddled general factotum, PBT, the fairy and the soldier, the town crier, assorted villagers and we mustn't forget the parrot. All played their parts with verve and enjoyment, involving the audience and displaying some fine singing voices (despite how they felt in rehearsal).

It is often difficult to single out individuals, but in this case I must. Sylvia Mann, in charge of the music, did a brilliant job, setting the mood and supporting the singers and generally putting everyone in pantomime spirit. She was a considerable asset to the whole pro-

duction.

Matt Dallas as the magician was simply outstanding. Apart from doing some splendid magic tricks, he drew children up on to the stage and got them thoroughly involved, never being thrown by some of their answers - an achievement in itself - and interacted with the adults in the audience too. He was a one-man show-within-a-show...and he can sing too! He more than compensated for the lack of the favourite children's scene.

Congratulations go to John Winson who pulled the whole show together.

I don't know about other members of the audience, but I certainly went home feeling very happy and thoroughly entertained and I am looking forward to seeing it again when it goes on tour to New Ash Green next Saturday.

Plus

- Panto in pictures **David Olbailey** 2
- What to Do... **Ima Starstruck** 2
- Rattigan Slain... **Terry Fairhead** 3
- PRATS strip... **Matt Dallas** 3

The Panto in Pictures



The Queen in her finery but her courtiers must have got dressed in the dark unless the mighty Cromwell was a mate of Robin Hood?

No one tinkles like Music Maestro Sylvia Mann



The Village People are banging but where's the macho cowboy, police man & native American?

Barbarous Baron with his Blithering Incontinents



...and they all lived happily ever after



The spray that kills 99.9% of all known villains



Have you heard the one about the Magician, the Fairy, the Soldier and his Parrot?

The Princess about to throw a strop or two



What to see, what to do...

Ima Starstruck



Our Showbiz Correspondent with her ear to the keyhole & iphone to the pulse

March 2017

Brick Lane Visit this year is the St. Patrick's Day event. The price will be £49.50 for the dinner plus the cost of the coach. Numbers are restricted to 16 by the size of the minibus, unless there is enough interest for a 23 seater. Further info from Lesley Boycott: lboycott@btinternet.com



May 2017

Annual Treasure Hunt—a time to tax the little grey cells and learn something about London arranged by Lesley Boycott: lboycott@btinternet.com

June 2017

Brick Lane Visit—the second visit is for the 25th Anniversary Event, details to follow and if interested contact Lesley Boycott: lboycott@btinternet.com

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Rattigan slain by Angry Young Men

Terry Fairhead



If you were asked to name the all-time top ten British playwrights, who would you include? Asks a our resident Arts Correspondent

Without doubt Shakespeare, whether you like his plays or not, would command top spot but the next nine would be fiendishly difficult to select. There would be no shortage of candidates though; such is the richness of British theatre.

Here are just a few names to conjure with: Bernard Shaw, J.B. Priestley, Oscar Wilde, Alan Bennett, Alan Ayckbourn, Harold Pinter, Tom Stoppard, Michael Frayn, Ben Jonson, Noel Coward, Joe Orton and John Osborne. There are many more, of course including a small number of women such as Caryl Churchill, Sarah Kane and Debbie Tucker Green, but however many British Playwrights you can think of you may be sure no two people are ever going to agree on which of them should be included in the top ten. The passing of time also plays a part because some playwrights just go out of fashion.

Take the man who is not included above for instance; the one time golden boy of the theatre; Terence Rattigan.



The case of George Archer-Shee, a young naval cadet, was the inspiration for the Play *The Winslow Boy*

Rattigan was born in London in 1911. His first successful play was the comedy, *French Without Tears* staged in 1936. This was followed in 1939 by *After the Dance*, a satirical social drama. Following that was a rather annoying interruption known as The Second World War in which Rattigan served in the Royal Air Force as a Coastal Command Short Sunderland rear gunner. The experience inspired him to write *Flare Path* staged in 1942. This he used to co-write the screen play for the film, *The Way to the Stars* first screened in 1945.

In 1946 *The Winslow Boy* was staged in London. This was followed by *Harlequinade*, *The Browning Version* and *Playbill* all in 1948. He wrote prolifically throughout the nineteen fifties produc-

ing almost one play a year and including *The Deep Blue Sea* and *Separate Tables*.

I can remember walking through the West End during that time and seeing three different theatres staging three different plays of his. He seemed unstoppable. But the times – in Bob Dylan’s immortal words – were a-changing. In 1956 John Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger* opened and was an overnight success. Instead of upper middle-class drama audiences now clamoured for the Kitchen Sink variety. The Angry Young Men had arrived and while Rattigan didn’t exactly exit stage left, he was never again the power he had been.

Today, he is rarely mentioned, but as far as I am concerned, he will always be in my top ten.

Pottham Regional Amateur Theatre Society By Matt Dallas



Matt Dallas 2017