

NORTH ESSEX THEATRE GUILD SHOWCASE FESTIVAL 2024-25

Wickham Bishops Drama Club

Goldilocks and the Three Bears directed by Pauline Roast

Adjudicated by Andrew Hodgson & Liz Mullen 10/1/25

FRONT OF HOUSE

It was a frosty night but the large hall was nonetheless cosy and a fair sized audience were present for the first night. We received a very friendly welcome from the FOH team and were given excellent seats. The complimentary refreshments at the interval, brought to our seats, were much appreciated.

The programme by Leigh Perry was impressively glossy and colourful, with excellent content that appealed to the whole audience.

The pre-curtain voice-over by Pauline Roast was lovely and really set the mood for the entertaining treat ahead for the audience.

SETTINGS/PROPS

The settings were excellent throughout the show. The atmospherically lit backdrop for the confrontation between good and evil, the comic book cosiness of the bears' rustic cabin (a lovely touch), and the Dame's cottage, with kitchen, were all very effective. Incidentally, we adored the lovely portrait of the Bear family on their wall! This showed good attention to detail. The opening circus background was a blaze of red, black, blue and yellow, and the perspectives were very good, the stairs really looked 3-D!

The stage management team did a good job, and generally scene changes went smoothly. The imaginative props included the handcuffs in the honey pot (not easy to lock into quickly though), the prison cage with its eventually bendable bars, the slapstick gunge in the kitchen, the charming musical box and Mystic Sharon's glowing orb. Well done to the props team for their work here.

COSTUMES

As always at this address, the costumes were outstanding. There was a brilliant choice of colours, especially for the clowns, which made a real impact in the opening number. The human elite, particularly the Baron, has a very nice Georgian touch, and Goldilocks looked charming and just right in her blonde wig. Wicked Heinkel, sporting an impressive moustache, was attired in glittering purple top hat, lapels, waistcoat and cuffs which was neatly echoed in the beautifully shimmering purple costume of Mystic Sharon. The cuddly bear family were given a modern twist with furry dungarees and baseball type caps with ears! Silly Billy wore checked trousers and braces and lived up to his name in a spiky wig whilst the Dame looked glorious in a succession of OTT gowns and ruby red wig. Generally the make-up, wigs/hairstyles were very good.

Congratulations for this aspect of the production, a visual feast!

TECHNICAL/MUSIC/CHOREOGRAPHY

With the soundtrack pre-recorded, the technical team deserve much praise for hitting so many crucial cues in both lighting and sound.

All the well-chosen music started at the right time and the cast were always ready. The lighting design was warmly atmospheric and complimented the sets and costumes. Good use of spotlighting and gobos for effects, we particularly loved the warmly lit cottage with the green wood outside, and the melodramatic spot-on sfx for the reactions to the stolen items was hilarious!

Director Pauline Roast had also provided some great choreography. Everything was attuned to the capabilities of the cast and looked very well rehearsed. The love duet was graced with some charming moves and the “Night Fever” number, instigated by the Bears, was fantastic and ended Act 1 on a high!

PRODUCTION

This was a traditional pantomime, with a good script by Tom Whalley. It contained, and combined, all the key elements you would expect; corny gags (some quite near the knuckle but hilarious!), slapstick, romance, villainy and lots of audience participation, which the cast encouraged very confidently. It had a strong storyline with a slightly modern twist and never overstayed its welcome. We thought the replacement of the sometimes dreaded community song with Billy’s traffic sign game, was truly refreshing! There was no chorus, but the twelve strong cast WAS the chorus so to speak, and this worked really well! There was a good-hearted confidence to this show which was evident from the start, the pace was good throughout and having a Dame with warmth, and experience (especially with ad libs), always helps but her character was never allowed to take over the limelight, as sometimes can happen. Pauline’s confident direction had instilled excellent team playing from her cast and they looked as though they were having a great time!

There were a few minor first night glitches, and we felt that occasionally some of the comic punchlines needed pointing up more, but overall the performance was a colourful delight that grew more confident as the evening progressed. Very well done!

PERFORMANCES

RINGMASTER HEINKEL: Nick Hewes was excellent as a true panto baddie! Whilst he was very evil, he was also very funny with his “cod” mid-European accent and black, twirling moustache!! Nick was highly skilled at working the audience and we loved his sardonic asides! An accomplished performance!

MYSTIC SHARON: Looking glamorous, with a soothing manner, after a slightly subdued start, Teresa Paddon’s performance grew in confidence as the show progressed. As the story unfolded, and the character of Sharon developed, Teresa showed a nice combination of magic and humour, really coming into her own in Act Two.

SNOT: This was a very funny cameo role as the Ringmaster’s put-upon side-kick, reminding us slightly of Baldrick in “Blackadder. Sue Walker’s facial expressions, and body language, were an absolute hoot! The audience loved it when Snot finally rebelled against her domineering master!

GOLDILOCKS: Robyn Tyler gave a confident and spirited performance as the heroine of the story. No shrinking violet, Goldilocks was at the thick of the action throughout and was sympathetic, and funny, in equal measure. Robyn had a strong speaking, and singing, voice and she worked very well with her fellow cast members!

SILLY BILLY: Unusually, this role fulfilled two functions in the story, comedy side-kick to the Dame, but also romantic partner to the heroine. This worked well, and Debbie Irby threw herself into this big part with wholehearted confidence and attack. Her energy never flagged and she handled all the physical comedy with clear skill and enjoyment! Well done!

DAME GERTIE DOLLOP: A really good pantomime Dame is not easy to perform, and are often hard to find! There were no such worries with Ross McTaggart's warm, lovable and relaxed circus owner. His performance made a big impact on the show but, as previously mentioned, he never overwhelmed it. Ross seemed very confident; showing good comic timing and working the audience with skill, the running gag with Richard was very funny, and there was excellent comedy pair-playing with Silly Billy. Very well done!

BARON WASTELAND: This was another characterisation that seemed to grow in confidence as the first performance progressed. Again, this was probably due to the development of the Baron, whose back story and place in the story was much more defined in Act Two. Charlie Willett looked just right and his fatherly concern for Goldilocks was evident from the start, even though he was initially presented as a villain.

THE BEAR FAMILY: James Milne, Leigh Perry and James Pugh were an absolute delight as this lovable trio of dancing bears! As Daddy, Mummy and Baby, they looked just right and each had their own moments to shine, as well as demonstrating excellent team work. We loved their musical numbers, and the famous scene with Goldilocks, in their cottage/cabin, was exactly as we would have wanted! Very well done!

COLOSSUS: A small role, but not small in person, Paul Welton was very droll and amusing as the circus strong man, who definitely made his presence felt!

VOICEOVER: Pauline Roast provided excellent vocals as our guide through the story, adding continuity to the proceedings.

SUMMATION

This was a very entertaining example of a traditional pantomime. The production, and performance, had great imagination and team work, with excellent visuals. We, like the rest of the enthusiastic audience, had a great time! Very well done!

Best Wishes
Andrew and Liz.

