

# REVIEW: Sleeping Beauty - The Grange Theatre, Oldham

What would you say the art form of pantomime was created for? In my mind, panto is a feel good form of theatre, deliberately ridiculous and deliberately extravagant, designed to humour and entertain. And tonight's show, 'Sleeping Beauty', was all of those things and more.

We all know the tale of 'Sleeping Beauty'; a child is cursed to prick her finger on a spindle on her 18th birthday, causing the whole palace to sleep for 100 years. The only thing that can break the spell is, of course, true love's kiss. A tale of good prevailing over evil; of monsters being defeated by heroes; and of love conquering all. On the face of it, this fantastical pantomime sounds ideal for entertaining the children. But what about the adults in the audience? I'm thrilled to say (as an adult) that this show catered to audiences of all ages. Children around me were laughing, clapping and singing along, and the same must be said for most of the adults in the audience too. This production took the old story we all know and love, and coupled it with modern musical numbers and humour of every kind; from slapstick to stand-up.

The all-round standard of this production was incredibly high. Watching the actors on stage, it was easy to forget that this was a youth production. The confidence and accomplishment seen tonight by every single performer wowed me. For me, the star of the show was Jonny Molyneux, who played Dame Sniff. His character was vibrant and amusing. He coped well with the unscripted elements of the show and showed a real flare for comic timing (not to mention his wonderful stand-out outfits). Alongside Molyneux, Elton Amoateng, Holly Norbury and James Valentine, who played Silly Billy, Trumpy and Trumpy's sidekick, Pumpy, respectively, also all gave wonderful comic performances. This was a large cast and so I cannot mention all performers, but special mention must also go to Jade Hamer, who played the evil Countess Carabosse. Every element of her performance was believably sinister and witch-like; from her voice, to her movement. She had the audience booing her within the first ten seconds of the show, which I assure you, is a good thing. The show was well-cast; each actor seemed perfectly suited to their role and I can see brilliant things for their futures.

The singing, dancing and acting were all incredible in this show, revealing the performers' superb versatility. The principal boy and girl; played by Lois Ormerod and Eva Carty, both had wonderful voices and their duets together were almost magical. Every single actor on the stage clearly loved what they were doing, and their passion radiated on stage and was felt throughout the audience.

The show itself worked like a well-oiled machine, thanks to the show's director Prab Singh, along with the rest of the cast and crew. There was clearly a lot of work going on behind the scenes here, with the endless set and prop changes, the multiple musical numbers and sound effects, and the sheer speed of the show's scene changes. All of which ensured we as an audience were never kept waiting. This only demonstrates how effective a performance can be when all the cast and crew work together as a collective.

The costumes were as splendid as a show like this deserved, from wardrobe team Claire Howarth, Trish Pemberton and Angie Mills, as was Mark Beaumont's set design, successfully creating the illusion of at least half a dozen different locations in a two hour show.

This was the first show I have seen from the North West Theatre Arts Company, and I can assure you that it will not be the last. Many people dismiss pantomimes as a silly and 'unprofessional' art form, but seeing tonight's performance, I would have to strongly disagree. OH YES I DO!

Reviewer – Megan Relph  
on - 25/1/19