

Society: Shaftesbury Arts Centre Drama Group

Venue: Shaftesbury Arts Centre

Production: Sleeping Beauty

Author: Stephen Duckham

Director: Sue Cadmore

Choreographer: Susan Grant

Date seen: 23rd January 2020

## SHOW REPORT

Principals performed with strong and clear characterisation: Prince Michael (Sophie Lester) was particularly expressive, traditional movement and style enhanced the dignity of the Prince; Aurora (Kate Murray) exuded youthful enthusiasm, elegance and grace; the pompous Lord Chamberlain (Kristian Payne) was suitably irritated at the interruptions of the trumpet; the Chorus of all ages were set tasks according to their abilities; lascivious Nanny Nora (Tom Murray) was lascivious and colourful; the excellent Barney (Sam Basinger-Adams) instantly engaged with the audience and onstage characters, maintaining high energy and commitment throughout; the Fairy Queen (Susan Grant) seemed genuinely caring, a perfect foil for Carabosse (Joni de Winter), who was a strong and forceful speaker, her evil laugh and menacing physicality indicating a relish for evil which was sustained and entirely believable - an outstanding performance.

A very high standard was set in the use of voice, with diction and expression of emotion clear in both speech and song, so that communication with the audience was excellent.

Music was catchy and well-chosen to relate to the plot; actors made good use of songs to illuminate their characters: Aurora was convincingly tearful; the Child Aurora (Iona Kennett) sang very sweetly, as did teen Aurora (Holly Potts-Skeye); songs for the Prince suited the clear, soft voice; 'Dreamland' made a perfect ending to Act One; the King and Queen (Bryan Farrell & Marie Stubbs) were at their best in performing 'When I'm Sixty-Four'; music and movement of the Woodland Sprites was menacing; Carabosse' dramatic expression and powerful singing was spellbinding.

---

### National Operatic and Dramatic Association

15 The Metro Centre, Peterborough PE2 7UH

**Tel** 01733 374 790 **Fax** 01733 237 286 **Email** [info@noda.org.uk](mailto:info@noda.org.uk) **Web** [www.noda.org.uk](http://www.noda.org.uk)

**Twitter** @NODAtweets **Facebook** NationalOperaticDramaticAssociation

Registered charity number 254640 Registered company number 241572 Registered in England and Wales at the above address. **Patron: The Lord Lloyd Webber**

The Chorus coped well with dancing on the small stage: close attention was paid to movement, notably a particularly graceful bow and curtsey from the Prince and Aurora; Barney's mannerisms with hat and braces helped to create the character; Nora and Barney's energetic knock-about Spanish number kept things lively; the King and Queen's Charleston was fun, with a trio of dancing girls and the Company; Carabosse' and Aurora's puppetry scene was very well controlled and co-ordinated; the ethereal Phantom dancers created an especially creepy air.

Principals' costumes ((Liz Carruthers, Sue Hoskins) were very good throughout, with Aurora's elegant shift dresses and headgear, Carabosse' evil purple and black contrasting with the sparkling Fairy, and the Dame's outrageous mixture of styles and themes outstanding. The Gruffalo-esque Beast was appealing. The appearance of the Woodlanders and the Phantom dancers was key in creating a spooky atmosphere.

With a strong technical team, this show offered a visual feast in other ways, also. Props (Rosie King) such as LED wands and embossed mirror-shield were well-made and utilised; bats rising were a nice touch. Pantomime arches and stone-painted rostra at varying levels created a strong basis for the Palace scenes; painting of the set and cloths was of a high standard; a projected stained glass window helped to evoke Carabosse' lair; a woodburner glowed; with visibly growing trees and Enchanted Creatures dancing against a green backlight, the Act One finale was a very pretty scene, becoming a magical Enchanted Forest, its rows of trees, green light, and low fog and haze creating a three-dimensional effect, which fell away as the Prince cut through, to reveal the sleeping Palace Court - an excellent use of lighting and effects to achieve this difficult forest illusion; strobe lighting gave an extra dimension as Carabosse disappeared into the ground. Carabosse brewing her dastardly potion was possibly the best-executed UV scene that I have seen. The blackness was maintained throughout, as the beautifully-painted UV ingredients floated and danced across the stage and into the huge cauldron, where a white lab-coated Carabosse stirred the pot - an excellent and magical illusion.

A very good show, respecting the traditional elements, with up-dated humour, excellent effects and some outstanding performances.

Sylvia Coates  
NODA Representative

*Any observation made by the reviewer is based only on the performance in question. The NODA Representative's intention is to give an objective critique of the production overall and in particular the performance viewed. Any criticism expressed may not be valid at other performances, and is made only to encourage higher standards in Amateur Theatre.*

**National Operatic and Dramatic Association**

15 The Metro Centre, Peterborough PE2 7UH

**Tel** 01733 374 790 **Fax** 01733 237 286 **Email** info@noda.org.uk **Web** www.noda.org.uk

**Twitter** @NODAtweets **Facebook** NationalOperaticDramaticAssociation

Registered charity number 254640 Registered company number 241572 Registered in England and Wales at the above address. **Patron: The Lord Lloyd Webber**