

**THE  
ROSE  
BOWL  
AWARDS**  
FOR AMATEUR  
DRAMA & MUSIC

**Hansel and Gretel  
By Norman Robbins**

**Hanham Folk Centre Players**

**Adjudicated by Rebecca Thompson  
6<sup>th</sup> January 2007**

Full of all the traditional elements of pantomime, 'Hansel and Gretel' draws from the Brothers Grimm fairy tale in plot, whilst the major battle of good and evil is fought between Attrocia the Wicked Witch and the Forest Fairy. The benefits of this script are the range of characters and the scope for physical comedy; the challenges are bringing spontaneity and new ideas to a familiar story, and also maintaining pace, particularly during the wordy and frequent verse speeches of the two fairies.

#### **PRESENTATION**

A range of sets was presented – all of which were colourful and attractive. The style of the village street, the Manor Hall and the lovely gingerbread house were all in-keeping with the fairy-tale theme, and were suitably bright and detailed. A good sense of perspective had been achieved in all of the more complex sets, but I did feel that the kitchen set was a little sparse and gloomy. I know that this is the witch's kitchen, but more fun could have been had here as far as culinary accessories and detail in the painting were concerned. The Romany scene was particularly eye-catching - colours, lighting and FX smoke all providing a very shady atmosphere here. In some of the scenes extra texture was added with colourful balloons and pennants.

The use of curtains was very effective throughout, and the lighting of a shadowy outline for Attrocia was effective in appearance, and also in that it provided a very quick scene change here. I did feel however, that there was more scope for introducing levels in the set – so useful when blocking large groups of people. I know you had a reasonably small stage, but even the occasional tree trunk or block in the larger scenes would have give the director more opportunity for interesting placing of players.

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The sets had obviously been well constructed and were changed swiftly, with little hindrance to the pace of the production.

#### LIGHTING

The plot was efficiently realised – cues were well timed and a range of colourful and interesting effects utilised to establish atmosphere. The gloomy gels used for the 'darker' scenes were particularly striking and the spot very well handled throughout. Well done!

#### SOUND/FX

Other than the final song, music was all live – this will come under a different heading. Flashes were all prompt and visually effective, and additional background FX precisely timed – I particularly enjoyed the humorous mallet sound at the end!

#### COSTUME

As with the set, a lot of thought and hard work had gone into creating a vast array of colourful and well-fitting costumes. The young chorus were dressed in pretty rural outfits, complete with bodices and mop caps, the black and red of the Romany scenes was very striking, and well done for making so many little gingerbreads! Our dame's attire was appropriately outrageous – I particularly liked your 'nightwear – and you had wig and shoes to match every outfit. Principal boy was in the traditional shorts and waistcoat – a pair of long boots would have been appropriate here; Lucy suitably sweet in her very white dress, and the bold orange and black gave Potz and Panz – complete with gelled hair and stainless steel hair accessories - a very striking image. Dickie was suitably 'dippy' in curly wig and braces and good and evil were clearly represented in the two shades of green for the fairy and witch. The mayor was clearly officious in his red and black – I liked the way the theme of these colours was carried through to the finale.

Hair and make-up were in keeping – although the Dame could have exaggerated her eyes and lips even more as the production progressed.

#### MUSICAL DIRECTION

Music was provided by a live band consisting of piano, bass and drums. The music was disciplined, well timed and never overwhelming – good!

Singing was competent throughout, but as is so often the case in amateur panto', there were just too many songs! Try to keep your audience wanting more, rather than feeling that every character needs to have his/her turn. The most successful numbers were the duo by Dickie and the Dame – this hit just the right note of irony and humour; the 'Truly Scrumptious' of our two young leads was also very commendable. On the whole panto' numbers should be very energetic, fast moving, short and a lot of fun! Try not to take the songs – even the love songs – too seriously.

Well done though, for achieving such discipline with your young and large cast – this does take a lot of work, I know!

## CHOREOGRAPHY

Again, very disciplined – but a little bland and uniform. It is not necessary to mark every word in a song with a movement, and try to use your chorus in ways other than long lines – I know it is hard when there are no levels on the stage. The ‘Gingerbread’ song was successful in grouping and shape, and the tap number brought some energy to ‘Happy Feet.’ Think about what has been mentioned with the singing – always look for the fun and humour in pantomime – the characters should be making the most of every opportunity to draw out these elements in their movement.

A lot of the youngsters were moving with elegance and enjoyment though – well done!

## STAGE MANAGEMENT

I have already used the word discipline – and this reflects the sense of teamwork and coherence that was firmly established backstage. Sets were changed (on the whole!) swiftly and quietly, and this young, large cast was on stage on time and in the right place! Good!

## DIRECTION

Overall this was a very purposeful and poised production. The cast was well chosen thoroughly rehearsed and showed a clear understanding of what was expected of them. Lines were secure with an intelligent sense of listening and cueing, there was some understanding of the need for pace and some effort had been made to establish variety and humour in characterisation. I felt this was a very promising cast – now I just wanted you all to up the energy and have more fun on stage!!

I have talked a lot about the fun in directing the music, dance and acting of a pantomime. Acting in panto’ is unlike any other style – although you do need to be disciplined, secure in your lines and a giving performer in terms of fellow players, this is also the one time when you can let yourself go a little, improvise, play with your audience and laugh with your audience because of the shared understanding that this is, after all, a pantomime. That connection with the audience was lacking here, and did effect the pace and energy of the production – the Dame and Dicke did connect a little, but there was so much more scope for their interaction with each other and with us.

I felt that you had considered the need for pace here, but do try and move the shorter scenes on really quickly. Don’t be afraid of characters talking whilst moving on and off stage, or while the curtains are opening, and try and vary the placing of the Witch and Fairy, so that these quite repetitive scenes do not become too similar. Placing of players was rather static throughout – if there is no room for extra levels, then use the auditorium for entrances, let a few of the chorus sit at the front, use downstage as off stage when appropriate – for example on page 43, Lucy could have hidden in our view here, preventing so many exits and entrances. Remember, too, to work on the very physical aspect of pantomime. This is hard, I know, for amateurs to achieve in a short rehearsal period – but people like Pots and Panz should be highly visual in their humour, overreacting to everything and interacting with each other much more

**physically. This aspect of direction will enable your players to unleash that added dimension of energy which is so vital to this genre.**