**NODA Review of ‘Puss in Boots’ 10th January 2017**

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A NOMADS’ pantomime always starts my New Year off well and sets the benchmark with which all other pantomimes throughout the year are measured. This year NOMADS gave us the (almost traditional) story of Puss in Boots written and directed by Elliott Papworth.  From the outset it was clear that this original script would be a winner.

As always with a NOMADS production there was good support from those behind the scenes and FOH all adding their unsung contribution. The scenery, lighting and sound effects were good. There was some good follow-spot work and praise be - no radio mic issues! The costumes, particularly the Dame's, were absolutely excellent.

Choreographer Jess Clifford knows NOMADS’ members well and gives them interesting, and lively routines which are all extremely well rehearsed and executed.

Musical Director Mark Aldous added extra music to underscore the dialogue this time round. In his programme notes he said we probably wouldn’t notice it but once or twice we did notice, such as the “slosh scene” in the flour mill when the actors had to shout to be heard; at other times, he is correct, it did heighten the dramatic flow of the script.

One could not fault the effort and commitment from the 19 strong cast.  Throughout the singing was great and the Ensemble all gave good confident performances. It was good to see even the youngest members holding their own with cast members older and more experienced.

Cat Blacker made a superb Fairy Wonder. Hers was a lovely natural performance and the audience warmed to her from the start. There was shades of *Wicked* when we met her counterpart: her evil sister Stivali played with great aplomb by Kira Brophy who responded to the hisses and boos with expertise and, it must be said, with a certain amount of pleasure.  This pairing was excellent and worked extremely well.

Of course you have to have a comedy duo in pantomimes and in this case we had James and Joe Miller (Andy McGowan & Colin Scott respectively).  This pair worked really well together and all their scenes were great fun.

I have had my eye on young Zara Minns for a while having seen her in Young NOMADS’ productions and it was a real pleasure to see her in the role of Puss and handling it so well.  Likewise Olivia Stevens who gave a bravura performance far beyond her years as Jack Miller.  In the Princess role was the talented and sweet-voiced Lauren Hobbs.

There were a couple supporting roles too, that of Ogre BigStomp (Oliver Squires) and The Courtier (Rosmy Cesaro) both of which were done really well.

Back in the Dame's role this year was Steven Beach as Queen Crossword.  I personally consider Stephen to be one of the best Dames around. He works the audience with great expertise and not even wardrobe malfunctions faze him.  A superb performance from a master (or mistress) of the genre.

I cannot leave out of this review something which happened the night I saw this show because it was something I have rarely experienced.  At one point I was in danger of crying with laughter.  I am referring to the “Knock, knock joke” scene.  If this was an original idea it was a brilliant one.  However, it would not have worked if it hadn’t have been done so well by the quartet involved.  It was absolutely priceless and was superbly and brilliantly done.

This was a really super evening’s entertainment.  Thank you NOMADS and all involved.   Can I just add one more thing?

“Knock, knock”

*“Who’s there?”*

“Elliott”

“*Elliott who?*”

Elliott Papworth who wrote and directed a brilliant pantomime.

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