

## Review

### DICK TURPIN NOMADS at Newmarket Kings Theatre Directed by Fiona Harvey-Maguire

Musical Director Mark Checkley      Choreographer Chloe Gilbert

Dick Turpin one of the less well-known pantomime being (as many pantomimes are) thin on plot relied on the actors to introduce us to and bring the characters to life which, thankfully, Director Fiona Harvey-Maguire's cast did. Forgoing pantomime tradition this one had no good and bad immortals but the audience was still given opportunities to cheer the hero and boo the villain.

The numerous settings were well done with some nicely created additions of farmhouse doors and a revolving secret panel. Lighting and sound effects were good and on cue with good use of body mics. All character based costumes were spot on and the gorgeous colour themed walk down costumes made everyone look splendid.

Chloe Gilbert always manages to provide interesting choreography which was executed with confidence by Ensemble and Principals alike. Musical Director Mark Checkley had done a fine job with the musical numbers. There were several well-known tunes and a few newer ones which included some very nice harmonies.

There was excellent pairing in the principal roles: Nick and Nab the semi-incompetent police officers (Jo Ward & Alex Schosland) worked well together even when driving their invisible car complete with blue lights flashing on their helmets. Super performance from Lauren Godfrey as Dick Turpin who had a nice warm relationship with love interest Caroline Lotaloot nicely played by Esther McIntyre. Jay Hopper as Katie Cuddlesome managed to turn on the emotions at the drop of a hat as she oscillated between adoring Dick Turpin (whom she had never met) and rejecting her hopeful lover Billy Bumpkin.

An absolutely excellent performance from Nigel Whitney as Parson Goodfellow aka (spoiler alert!) Mr X. Two fine characterisations.

Of course no pantomime would be complete without a village idiot and a Dame and this panto had two of the best. Excellent work by Jamie Maguire as Billy Bumpkin super delivery and good rapport with the audience. Jamie executed two of the best prat falls I have seen in a long time during the chase scene (which personally I felt went on far too long). Then we had the indefatigable Steve Beach as Dame Dolly Dollop. With seemingly boundless energy Steve worked his socks off, never missing the opportunity to bring out the comedy in the script. Every entrance had a new outfit and wig. I started counting the costume changes but gave up at ten! Well done to Dolly's dresser too.

There was good support from Nick Frankau (Lord Lotaloot), Steven Fenn (The Judge), Anita Marshall and Charlie Maguire as Smash and Grab and the hard working Ensemble.

Although the Wednesday night audience was 99% adults and smaller than a matinee audience the cast kept the energy up throughout which is not easy mid-way through a ten performance run. As always NOMADS provided a great evening with a good colourful panto to start 2025.

Julie Petrucci

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The Newmarket Kings Theatre had the audiences stamping their feet (literally) with its latest pantomime, 'Dick Turpin'. This year, the production took on the less conventional tale of the infamous highwayman, centred around the unjustly accused hero, Dick Turpin, who is wrongfully impersonated by the menacing Parson, intent on stealing Lord Lootalot's prized jewels. The plot is complemented by a charming love story involving Lord Lootalot's daughter, Caroline, who finds herself enamoured with a local farmhand—who may just be Dick himself.

Lauren Godfrey brought boundless energy to the hero's role, punctuated by numerous thigh slaps and a nicely disguised west country accent. Nick Frankau's portrayal of Lord Lootalot, while somewhat over-the-top, suited the pantomime style, though it occasionally bordered on the excessive. Esther McIntyre infused her character, Caroline, with a fittingly demure presence that balanced her father's exuberance. Nigel Witney, as the Parson, deftly transitioned from a mild-mannered cleric by day to a menacing robber by night, aided by clever sound effects and a transformative mask. I don't know whether I hadn't engaged my brain or if it was just that the disguise was very effective, but it genuinely took me a few scenes to realise the 'baddy' was the parson!

Balancing the main plot, of course, were your typical panto characters. This included the very accomplished comedic duo, Nick (Joe Ward) and Nab (Alex Schosland), the bumbling police officers with flashing blue light helmets and a steering wheel. Their make-believe car added a delightful touch, bringing them on and off stage with a creaky bones sound effect every time they bobbed up and down – a subtle but nice little touch.

We then had the prerequisite for any panto, the local farmer, Dame Dollop (Steve Beach), along with her simpleton son Billy Bumpkin (Jamie Maguire) and his endearing love interest, Katie Cuddlesome (Jay Hopper). These three were truly the highlight of the show. They all interacted so well and the development of Katie's realisation that she was also in love with Billy was, for a predictable panto plot, really well acted. I was particularly impressed by Steve's dame, probably one of the most natural (if that's possible with a dame) I've seen in a while and so many costume changes – bravo sir, or should that be brava ma'am?

Supporting the cast were an energetic ensemble of all ages. Choreography (Chloe Gilbert) was simple throughout and all big dances numbers worked, but could have afforded a little more polish in my view.

There was a nicely executed confused chase scene in Act 2, in and out of a well thought through stage set with several on-stage doors and a revolving bookcase. There were also some nice backdrops and curtains. Overall, the set was well executed.

One of the true highlights of the show was the costumes, a testament to the skill and creativity of Sarah Smith, Wallace Wareham, and the 'sewing bees'. From the opening scene, where the cast appeared in charming gingham village outfits, to the grand finale featuring an array of gold and red costumes, the visual spectacle was a delight. The numerous costume changes for the Dame were particularly impressive, showcasing a variety of flamboyant outfits that added to the humour and charm of the production. A round of applause is well deserved for all those working behind the scenes to give the show such vibrancy.

The little throw backs to the last play ("I shall have my hanging!" "Wizard!" etc) did not go unnoticed.

Directed by Fiona Harvey-Maguire and musically directed by Mark Checkley, NOMADS produced a good evening's entertainment. Well done to all the cast and crew – a most enjoyable evening!