

NODA Review

ELF The Musical JR
Performed by Young NOMADS
Kings Theatre, Newmarket.

Once again, it proved to be a pleasure to attend the Kings Theatre for a Young NOMADS' production. Based on the film of the same name, this show tells the comical tale of Buddy the oversized Elf and his adventures in the big wide world. Being a character completely lacking in guile, Buddy's refreshingly open hearted approach to the world around him is the source of most of the humour in the show: the Yuletide scrapes he gets into (of course) resolving themselves with a suitably heart-melting happy ending as befits the Christmas setting.

Heading up the cast list as Buddy was **Charlie Wilson**, who had the tireless energy and confidence needed to carry this demanding role. He was very much the driving force of the production and rose to the challenge with a supremely effervescent performance.

The Elves of the North Pole were all lively and suitably clad in elfin garb, with Santa himself (**Thomas Wilson**) a nicely jolly figure. *Happy All the Time* was a particularly glittery opening number and was well performed by the ensemble, with a backing track used instead of an orchestral accompaniment throughout the show. The cast had clearly been well drilled musically by MD **Joseph Hall**.

Buddy's trek to find his real father takes him to New York in search of bad-tempered businessman Walter Hobbs (**Joseph Beach**) who is such a rotter, he's made it onto Santa's Naughty List! Joseph played the character just right, hinting at the fact that here was a steel hearted business who just might be receptive to the spirit of Christmas by the time we arrive at the finale.

After causing havoc in Hobbs' office, Buddy is set to work as a shelf stacker in Macy's department store where he bumps into fellow employee Jovie, beautifully played by **Faye Dower**. Buddy invites Jovie on a date which doesn't go well. Faye's performance of *Never Fall in Love (With an Elf)* was one of the highlights of the whole show for me; a great song beautifully sung. Faye is definitely one to watch.

Very strong performances came from Mr Dobbs' wife and daughter played by **Lara Keen** and **Alice Cournane** and **Otea Qvam-Hamblett** made a very authoritative store manager.

The rest of the thirty-strong cast performed with style and confidence in a number of smaller roles and provided strong vocal support with colourful costumes and a number of scenes which benefitted from thoughtful staging and considered choreography by **Sinead Mathias**.

The 2-level staging was simple, effective and well-used. Scene changes were so well managed by the cast at times they appeared to happen by magic. The lighting was good but once or twice the sound fell prey to the curse of the body mics which, as you may know, is something of a *bête noir* for me.

All in all however this was a really enjoyable bit of pre-festive fun which fitted Young NOMADS like a glove. NOMADS Kings Theatre's nurturing support for its young people and the real 'society' feeling which emanates from the stage is obvious.

Young NOMADS really had their "sparkle on" and Director **Jess Clifford** is to be commended for providing an evening of pacy, tuneful family fun, presenting a musical treat with this charming little show which brought a touch of (very) early Christmas spirit to us all.

Julie Petrucci
Regional Representative NODA East District Four South.