

Group: Starburst
Show: Aladdin: Adventures in the East
Venue: The Harlington, Fleet
Date: 21 December 2019
Director: Ellie Keon
Musical Director: Max Topliss
Choreographer: Liz Woodford



Aladdin: This production was a fabulously lavish musical extravaganza; an old story where the young boy fell in love with the beautiful princess but the course of true love did not run smoothly with disapproving parents and wicked Abanazar with his henchmen. From the gloriously uplifting opening song “Brand New Day” to the fantastic finale, this was an evening packed with humour, great musical numbers, comic interludes and splendid special effects. We were whisked away from a miserable rain-soaked December evening to a land of sunshine, Eastern promise and sparkling costumes.

Scenery/Set/Properties: The sets were excellent from the Land of the Far East, to Widow Twankey’s Laundry, the Cave of Wonder, the Bazaar and the Palace, all were exquisitely decorated and excellent representations adding authenticity to proceedings. The props were well used by the cast and the Chinese Tiger/Lion/Dragon was outstanding and deserves a special mention.

Costume/Hair/Make Up: All the costumes were of the highest quality; there was great attention to detail in ensuring each character was appropriately dressed. A lot of thought had gone into the use of costume and hair to emphasise the personality of the characters such as Soapy Sophie and the double act: Doner and Kebab. Princess Jasmine and Sultana’s costumes were absolutely exquisite, rich in colour and intricate in design. Widow Twankey’s various outfits were bright and in keeping with the liveliness of the panto.

Lighting, sound and special effects: The lighting was well controlled and imaginative. The design and execution of the Magic Carpet sequence was mesmerizing and remarkably effective. The live music, under the direction of Max Topliss was excellent and blended well with the impressive singing.

The production: This production whisked us away to a magical land but with contemporary touches such as Jenny, Genie of the Ring responding as if reciting a call centre script and many local references. There was a wide variety of characters: love-struck Aladdin (Josh Raine) who had a great instinct for comedy, Princess Jasmine had dignity (as well as fabulous costumes), Charlee Prentice oozed wickedness as Abanazar but Daryl Quick stole the show as Widow Twankey with his immensely sharp banter and warmth. He had great rapport with the audience. His experience showed when he was able to get the show back on script when interrupted by the enthusiastic audience. The entire cast had good comic timing and kept the action going throughout the evening. Overall there were some assured performances. Enormous credit is due to all those on the stage and those unseen members of the group who were probably working as hard (if not harder) than those on the stage. Well Done to first time director, Ellie Keon with choreography from Liz Woodford, for staging another fabulous first class evening from Starburst!

A short version of this review will appear on the NODA Website (South East Region) in due course.

Chris Horton

District 14 Regional Representative NODA SOUTH EAST