

Players keep the audience laughing

THEATRE REVIEW by Tom Glover



■ COMEDY TRIO - Simple Simon (Tom Staple), Dame Roid (Haydn Wright) and Zipper (Pete Moores)

A **BYPASS** through Pantoland was the nemesis that threatened Cinderella in the Chidecock Players latest take on a fairy-tale classic.

The players' production is always a highlight of the pantomime season as they not only act, direct and choreograph their shows but also write them.

The multi-talented Leigh Conley wrote this year's script providing the perfect balance of local references, nods to popular culture and some genuine laugh out loud moments.

Not content with just writing his first show, Leigh was also director, co-musical director, co-choreographer, set designer and set builder, sound controller and programme designer.

Aiding him in the production all the way was Kim Newton who added to the script as well as taking on roles as assistant director, set designer and set builder.

The pair were supported by a team of stage and front of house crew who made sure the show ran smoothly throughout.

On the stage Pete Moores took on narration duties as the loveable Zipper, providing the perfect link between the audience and the action.

Cinderella (Taz Moores) and Little Boy Blue (Catherine Batten) played the romantic leads and helped Zipper keep the action moving along well.

In a laugh heavy show, much of the humour came from the idiotic antics of Simple Simon (Tom Staple) who never did manage to finish one of his risqué poems but got his girl in the end.

The boos and hisses were rained down upon Nick Baker as he revelled in his role as "The Great Colin", ably assisted by his fumbling henchmen Boddgett (Di Dowle) and Scarper (Sarah Williams). Despite being mute for most of the show Sarah had an engaging stage presence and her singing voice stood out from the crowd in the musical numbers.

The comic talents of Haydn Wright made him the perfect dame, with a little help from his great big white baps and a unique female voice.

The most seasoned member of the players, Natalie Williams, played Miss Muffett and her experience shone through as she delivered her every line faultlessly and with the perfect amount of pantomime exuberance.

The predictably cute children's chorus showed the next generation of stage stars being bred in the village. The youngest chorus member, Chloe West, caught the eye of most of the audience singing her heart out and doing her best to keep up with the older chorus members as they danced around the stage.

In smaller roles both Val Cowell (Mrs Smith) and Moira Lucas (Moira) made their presence felt, proving to be the perfect pair of collection fairies, and Nick Ziegler (Otto Mated) and Pam Fuller (Dolores) completed the line-up.

The production was far from word perfect on its final night but the cast ad-libbed their way through the mistakes with genuine skill and created some extra laughs for the audience to enjoy.



■ STAGE STARS - Dolores (Pam Fuller) and Miss Muffett (Natalie Williams)



■ PANTO VILLIANS - Scarper (Sarah Williams) and The Great Colin (Nick Baker) take on Dame Roid (Haydn Wright)