



Society : ELODS
Production : Chitty Chitty Bang Bang
Date : 25/10/19
Venue : Wylyotts Centre, Potters Bar
Report by : Robert Murray

Show Report

General

I was really excited to see Chitty as it was one of my favourite films growing up. This production was excellent with lots of laughter, innuendo and moments of delight. Well done to the whole cast for a thoroughly enjoyable evening.

Director

Well done to Gail Ashwell who put together a fast moving and well performed musical, and it was obvious that she had total buy in from the whole cast who were all on point. There really weren't any negatives I could find in the production and the set was used very well with the Vulgarian office stage right. Some of the little touches really made the show such as the cast coming on backwards to make it look like the car was moving and the interaction at one point between the cast and the band.

Music

Led by Mark Newport the band of twelve were superb, the music was clear and absolutely spot on. I loved the interaction between the Baroness and Mark getting the right key and I did see the percussion panic when he nearly missed the second sound effect for the key turn on the music box but it was slick, swift and very enjoyable. A little dialogue was lost due to volume of the band but it didn't take anything away from the overall performance.

Choreography

Well done to David Adams and Paula Bland, the chorus numbers were really good without anyone pulling focus but it was apparent the different abilities on the stage. I was mightily impressed with the kids dancing with grandpa with perfect timing. They moved as one.

Principal Cast

Nic Corden as Caracatus Potts. Great voice, good mover and believable Dad to Jeremy and Jemima. A strong performance that carried the character right through the show. I had shivers when he sang Hushabye Mountain to the children. Additional kudos to Nic for his support with getting Chitty ready for the show too.

Lizzie Droy was really truly scrumptious in this role. Super voice and her music box number was sensational. It was clear her friends were in this night and I applaud them for their standing ovation at the end.

Krrish Patel and Sophia Lynch made Jeremy and Jemima so believable. What great camaraderie between them. I look forward to seeing them both again in the future. Hope they enjoyed performing as much as I did watching them.

Grandpa was played by Steve Milligan who stood in two weeks before the show when Roger Bunnage was taken ill. You would never have known Steve had stood in, very well done. Posh with the two kids was absolutely charming and I wish Roger a speedy recovery.

Andy Nicol and Natalie O'Sullivan absolutely stole the show as the Baron and Baroness. Two very strong actors and singers with superb characterisation. There were moments of absolute hysterics when they were on stage. Even when the Baroness almost lost her wig when she fainted it was brilliant.

Goran and Boris portrayed by Mark Tobin and Richard Hutchinson were a great pairing. When they came out to the audience the kids around me were so excited but disappointed when the spies went to the adults in the middle. I loved their narration thrown in to aid the storytelling even though the accents did get dropped at times they were very believable. Good use of props for them to hide behind through the show.

David Watts as the childcatcher could have been a bit more sinister. After glimpsing him in the wings there was no surprise when he did come on. The costume and make up were great but the part should have commanded more reaction, it would have been good to see kids in actual fear of the character when he came on finally.

Other parts

Stef Parker as Miss Phillips strong female character portrayed well but I did have to really think back to remember her as she just fitted into the running of the show.

Steve Berman as the toy maker will always be compared to Benny Hill but he was great in this part and interacted with kids really well. The pink trousers were a bit over the top and I would have liked to see the character a bit more exaggerated too.

Lord Scrumptious by David Dowse was fun but I would have liked to have seen him a bit more pompous and uppity as the character should be portrayed. Lord Scrumptious should have commanded total control of the scenes in the sweet factory but these were a little limp.

John Lynch as Coggins was a little difficult to hear at first but this may have been technical otherwise a nice depiction and good interaction with the kids at the beginning and the extra scrap metal character.

Chorus

Well the song did say the team work makes the dream work and this couldn't have been truer here. Well done to all the chorus and extra kids especially the lady who helped the smallest child at the end when his mic pack fell to the floor and he struggled to pick it up. Well covered.

The four female soldiers were so funny especially the lady shot to the floor where she lay for the whole scene.

The smaller parts covered by the chorus such as the scientists, haircut couple, Mr Matthews the turkey farmer and the soldiers all added to the flow of the performance and I love when a director gives out as many parts and lines as they can to the chorus.

Team Lollipop were gorgeous and I commend the kids for their interaction with the main cast after having to wait for the second half just to get on stage.

A note for the chorus though, if you use props such as sweets all stuck to a plate don't bring them out sideways as it kills the illusion but I'm being really picky as there was very little I could fault with this production.

Other

Big shout out to stage management, props and costumes who had big tasks putting this show on but achieved great success and a special mention to Chitty who was presented very well although I understand that she got a lot of attention in the interval. The car was handled really well and it was believable that she was driving, flying and sailing when required in the storyline.

There was a tad too much smoke used during the boat chase that we lost sight of the cast in the car half way through the show accompanied by one of the kids coughing when the smoke hit them.

Props

Props were presented well and in keeping with the show and the era they presented. The telephones used were the right era and Trulys bicycle that was made to look like a motorbike was done really cleverly. I liked the childcatchers cage and how it was changed but would have liked to have seen it on the stage a bit further as we would only see a bit of it. Not really props but I liked the backstage crew all dressed the same with their bowler hats on, well kept in keeping with the piece.

Scenery

The scenery used was effective. The toy shop on the back of Grandpas India box was good use of scenery and I loved the trap door on the side into the basement. Good illusion of the box flying to Vulgaria was great attention to detail. Not necessarily scenery but some of the implied scenes created by sound effects such as the dogs into the factory were a great addition to the scenes.

Lighting

The use of Lighting was very clever with blank coloured backdrop and lighting used to set the scenes such as clouds and the scrumptious factory. Spotlights were 'spot on' and at no point did I feel someone was lost in the dark. I liked the use of the strung lights pulled out across the stage too to create an effect. A mixture of lights and smoke in the boat chase scene caused everyone to be lost in the smoke.

Programme & Front of House

Programme was well laid out and informative and it was great to see the front of house staff all easily recognised with their badges. They greeted most people as they came in but I did help one lady in a wheelchair who struggled with the lip of the doorframe coming in as no one else saw her struggling.

All in all the audience loved the show and there were lots of smiling faces during the interval and after the show. I look forward to My Fair Lady next Spring

Robert Murray
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