

Society : Wargrave Theatre
Production : Robinson Crusoe and the Pirates
Written by : Alan Frayn
Date : 26/01/2025
Venue : Woodlcyffe Hall, Wargrave
District : 13
Reviewer : Cate Naylor

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[Show Report](#)

Thank you for inviting me to your production of Robinson Crusoe and the Pirates. It was lovely to meet both the directors in the interval and to hear from about the fun and enjoyment they had in directing the show.

This was a wonderful production and probably one of the best pantomimes that I have seen since becoming a NODA representative. It was very well cast and everyone worked brilliantly together. The whole cast spoke clearly with perfect comic timing and the singing and dancing was of a high quality, well done!

I loved the inclusion of the youth group members who certainly held their own in the show. It is wonderful to see the youngsters gaining experience of being on stage with the adult group and I am sure that they will have gained a lot of confidence from it.

Cast

Samantha Fields (Robinson Crusoe)

Samantha certainly looked the part as a principal boy with her shorts, fish nets and jerkin. She gave a confident performance with plenty of thigh slapping and good movement across the stage. Her chemistry with Juanita the principal girl and love of her life was lovely. Samantha had a strong singing voice delivering her songs with lovely tone, dynamics and phrasing. Her duet with Juanita was great with some lovely harmony singing.

Mike Watt (Margarita Jucilita)

What a wonderful Dame Mike was! He played on the fact that he was obviously a man dressed as a woman and delivered his lines with the perfect dame voice and a lovely twinkle in his eye. He had

great stage presence and developed a good rapport with the audience. His comic timing was perfect, and he delivered his innuendos and corny jokes perfectly causing both the kids and adults to roar with laughter. He sang well, his movement around the stage worked very well for his character and he was totally in command. The slapstick routine with the toilet brush and water flicking into the audience was hilarious and he had us all in stitches.

Kelly Doward (Nutty Nick)

I loved Kelly's character. She was brilliant at being simple with some amazing facial expressions, reactions, and physicality. She absolutely had the audience in the palms of her hands and the kids loved her. She had excellent comic timing and her ability to deliver her nutty Nick tongue twister with speed and clarity was masterful. Her double act with the dog was so funny and her manipulation of the bottle of water to make the dog wee on the audience much to everyone's delight was very well managed.

Clive Dow (Captain Seasalt)

Clive portrayed the captain as gentle and slightly unsure which worked well for the part. He had good line delivery and good reactions to Jucilita's flirting. His movement suited the role, and he rocked his Bermuda shorts.

Josie Daman (Juanita)

Josie made a good principal girl with a good balance between being the beautiful love interest for Robinson with a fair amount of feistiness. She had good clear diction in her dialogue and sang with lovely tone and tuning. Her duet with harmonies that she sang with Robinson was very good and their voices balanced nicely. Josie was also a very good dancer, leading the chorus in many of the dance numbers including an energetic tap style dance.

Rachael Wood (Cut Throat)

What a good baddie Rachel was, speaking menacingly with a natural pirate burr. She was completely in control of her recruited henchmen making the most of their incompetence to control them. She sang 'I am a Pirate King' with great character and although it seemed to be at the lower end of her register, she hit all the notes and sang with clear diction. Rachel commanded the stage, entering to

increasingly loud boos and clearly looked to be relishing in them. I suspect that she was really enjoying playing a baddie 😊

Graham Wheal (Skull-Duggery) and **Sara Beazley** (Cross-Bones)

These two made an excellent double act. They were always in character with excellent facial expressions, reacting to each other and everything that was going on around them brilliantly. Both were less than intelligent, and they played on this and the mistakes they made with ease. Their comic timing was excellent, and they delivered all their lines clearly and in character. I loved Cross-Bones' Bristol accent which never slipped. Both had great physicality and were a joy to watch.

Kat Daman (Friday)

Kat had good clear diction and projection and interacted very naturally with Robinson and her parrot Poll. She had a lovely warm demeanour to her character.

Ian Bacon (Hocus Pocus)

Ian played the witch doctor Hocus Pocus with great characterisation and brilliant facial expressions. All his communication was in grunts, but it was very clear from his expressions what he was thinking and saying. Ian was clearly relished in the part, and I loved his physicality and comedy.

Grace Tye (Mumbo Jumbo)

Grace was absolutely revelling in her role as the blood thirsty cannibal chief of the island. She sang and moved well in her song 'Hot Stuff' leading the other islanders in a rousing song and dance routine whilst the dame and her friends stewed in the cooking pot.

Anna James (Coral)

This was a charming portrayal of the good fairy who was going to do her best to make everything right if she could. Anna had a beaming smile as soon as she entered the stage and exuded kindness whenever we saw her. She delivered her rhyming lines in a lovely sing-song voice instilling confidence in everyone that things would finally come good. It was a lovely touch to have her enjoying the coconut cocktail in act two.

Graham Howe (Davy Jones)

What an entrance Graham made as the fearsome half man half sea creature. He delivered his lines with authority and menace, commanding the stage and moving confidently and in character.

Ann Pearce (Poll)

This was a lovely performance from Ann, and she delivered her lines in a very authentic parrot voice. Her movement around the stage was bird-like, flamboyant and funny!

Ian Bacon, Kat Damon, Alan Fear, Sophie Hucker, Tanya Jessop, Alex Limia, Andy Luckwell, Ann Pearce, Lloyd Scrivener, Elizabeth Tawse (Chorus)

This was a very strong chorus who worked brilliantly together. They sang and danced with confidence and skill and were a joy to watch. The Mexican band were hilarious and brought a lot of comedy as they played their instruments to accompany their señoritas. This they contrasted brilliantly with the rather sinister fishes and sea creatures. All of the group sang well, and it was great to hear some strong bass voices to balance the ladies. They also danced very well with perfectly timed dance moves and good style.

Alice Parrett, Beatrice Parrett, Florence Parrett, Grace Paddison, Hector Hughes, Nancy Hughes, Poppy Simmonds, Zac Winter, Bruce Christensen, Huw Rees, Martha Rees, Freya Hall, Marnie Tang, Orson Tang, Ada Tang, Rufus Fear-Bettis, Emily Ramsey, Isabella Davies, Jasmine Kandohla, Finlay Skinner, Darcie Bennett (Youth Chorus)

I love to see a society's youth group involved in their pantomime and looking at the programme, it seemed like all of the group were taking part. I am not sure which of them were performing in the show I saw, but they were great, performing with confidence and holding their own with the adults. The fights between them and the adults were brilliant and the choreographer made the most of them being small and had them scuttling between their fight partner's legs adding extra humour to the action.

Creatives

Linda Daman and Emmajane Hughes (Directors)

What a triumph this was for the directors Linda and Emmajane. It was an excellent script and the cast under their direction made the most of it. Their line delivery and comic timing were slick and punchy and they never missed a beat with the corny jokes and innuendos. The production was perfectly cast with each of the principals giving excellent performances supported by equally excellent adult and youth group chorus members. The messy scenes were cleverly designed with simple but effective visual gags which involved the front few rows getting showered by water spray much to the delight of the children. The audience were engaged and lapping it up from beginning to end as the panto romped along with energy and pace.

Peter Hughes (Musical Director)

The MD had obviously worked hard with the entire cast to give confident and quality vocal performances. Everyone sang with good tuning and expression and there were some lovely harmonies in the principal boy and girl's duet. Peter cued the music through his laptop whilst bringing the singers in so that they all hit their entrances perfectly.

Josie Daman (Choreographer)

There was an abundance of entertaining and energetic choreography with a lot of variety, which the cast danced with confidence and style. There were very many dance highlights of which the Mexican villager 'tap' routine, the sailor's mop routine, the cannibal's calypso dance stood out. The fight choreography was also excellent and very entertaining making great use of the youth group members.

Dave Robinson (Stage Manager) with **Matthew Gordon, Kate Robinson, Henry Marchant and Alex Schatunowski** with **Chez Annetts** (Chaperone)

Back stage was very efficiently run with smooth and slick scene changes including moving the palm trees into place with fishing wire as well as the set pieces. The crew were also kept busy managing some of the effects; flying seagulls, swimming sharks, a windsurfer and the silk sea which stretched across the stage. The stage manager with the assistance of the chaperone kept the wings and clear so that entrances and exits from the stage were smooth and the youngsters were kept safe at all times.

Sheila Williams (Set Design) with **Peder Christensen, Matthew Gordon, Alan Fear, Martin Lorenz, Dave Robinson, Alex Schatunowski, Jake Wheal** (Set Construction) and **Sheila Brockelbank, Shelagh Casebourne, Sheridan Lewis, Martin Lorenz, Sheila Williams, and Steve Woodbridge**

The home-built set had been well designed with some lovely hand painted drops for the sea and the Mexican village complete with lots of little colourful houses. The fold out palm trees, cocktail bar and Davy Jones's locker were also effective. The tall mast and ships wheel were a clever design to simulate a ship and having rats climbing up and down it was a very nice effect.

Simon Calverley (Lighting)

The stage was well lit with no areas of shadow on the stage and there was good use of lighting effects to create different moods. This was especially effective in the underwater scenes. I liked the stars projected above the stage at nighttime and the lightening effect.

Peter Knowles and Rod Murray (Sound Design)

There was good use of rousing music to start both acts and the balance of the sound between the tracks and the singers was good. The sound cues were well timed with storms, thunder, and a few sea gulls. The sat nav voice was a funny addition to the task of finding where X marked the spot.

Linda Daman, Emmajane Hughes, Kate Claverley, Tanya Jessop, Helen Knowles, Judi Rowlands, Patricia Vella, Claire Vertigan (Costumes)

What an impressive set of costumes there were in this pantomime with such attention to detail. They were vibrant, colourful and hugely imaginative. There are too many brilliant costumes to mention them all, but of special note were: Davy Jones' half man half sea creature, the Mexican men, the dame's sailor dress, the fish masks complete with scary teeth and the Aztek outfits for the natives. My absolute favourites though were the jelly fish. Who knew that with a clear umbrella, some plastic sheets set with little lights and pink streamers that you could fashion an amazing jelly fish? All of this was made even more realistic by the actors wearing morph suits so that the jelly fish really looked to be floating through the sea.

Daniel Melville and Harriet Wigmore-Welsh (Properties)

There were a large number of props, all of which were perfectly sourced for their purpose. There were plenty of cutlasses, coconuts and mops, The messy elements of the pantomime in the dame's

kitchen were made all the better by the clever props. Using a funnel and tube to deliver some flour into their faces and a toilet brush in a container of water for the dame to splash over the audience brought a lot of laughter. There were also some lovely touches to add humour, not least the dame's frilly knickers hanging out of her suitcase, the moving snail, fisheyes that pinged out into the audience and plenty of dog poo to amuse the kids. The large soft toy dog was also a great prop which Nick managed effectively so that it reacted to things going on onstage by nodding and shaking his head. The effect to make the dog wee on the audience was very clever and was loved by the children.

Congratulations to everyone involved in this wonderful pantomime which I thoroughly enjoyed. It certainly looked like the whole cast were having a great time on stage and it was clear that there was huge camaraderie.

I look forward to joining you again for your next show.

Cate

NODA London District 13 Representative