



Nellie of Norval, alias John Roe, makes her curtsy to Prince Charming as she is presented to the Prince at the beginning of the Prince's birthday ball. Sister Annie of

Acton, alias Gerry Eggleton, watches her sister. The two men were part of the Georgetown Little Theatre's Christmas Production, Cinderella, shown at Howard Wrigglesworth Public School last week. (Photo by Maggie Hannah)

**REVIEW**

**GLT's pantomime lives up to traditions**

By PAUL DORSEY

A centuries-old tradition in England, the Christmas pantomime is almost by definition an annual amateur night presentation by and for the common folk that takes place this time of year in neighborhood community halls all over Britain.

Invariably, the anything-but-silent "pantomime" skits offer a nursery rhyme as their basis to keep the youngsters interested, a bit of fast-paced ribald dialogue for the adults and enough slapstick comedy to keep spectators of all ages laughing throughout.

The Georgetown Little Theatre (GLT) had most of the fine Christmas pantomime traditions working for its production of Cinderella, presented last Thursday through Sunday at Howard Wrigglesworth public school, plus the added factor of its members' immeasurable acting talents.

The fact that many of the Cinderella cast and crew members are English-Canadians clearly gave the play something of a head start as far as the audience's appreciation was concerned. Fortunately for all of us, GLT veterans like Ron Hunt routinely incorporate their indubitably British humor into many a comedy segment on the local stage.

**NOT TOO FAR**

In writing and directing Cinderella, the GLT's Margaret Eggleton took care not to vary too far from the successful pantomime format she not doubt enjoyed in England, and in keeping with that format, the classic children's story of Cinderella and the glass slipper was rewritten into a "Hilton Hills version" that saw the names of several Georgetown dignitaries and businesses dropping like calling cards throughout the play's dialogue.

Mayor Pete Pomeroy was mentioned, for example, and in a not altogether kindly context at that, having delegated two of his "subjects" to repossess some "early Zeileers" furniture at Ballin's fort castle, where the bulk of the play's action transpires.

The mayor's command is, of course, greeted with righteous indignation by the self-proclaimed "master" of the castle, Bertha, the Baroness of Ballinad. As Bertha, Vera Macdonald stomps, bellows and shrieks her way through the play, exaggerating her character's nature, as is both necessary and traditional in such farcical comedies, to the point where her unfortunate daughter, Cinderella, virtually shines with divine radiance by comparison.

This juxtaposition of opposites is a key factor in the simplified format of Great Britain's Christmas pantomime. A "recipe" for the play, outlined in the programmes for Cinderella, best explains this approach: "Take the time-honored fairy tale of Cinderella and stir in some local names and places. Mix together the ugly and the beautiful, the good and the bad. Add equal measures of extraordinary characters, colorful scenery and topical songs, and spread the entire mixture across the stage. Place in front of an audience and enjoy."

The good versus evil theme is drawn directly from the original version of Cinderella, in which the evil intentions of evil relatives are stymied by the perfectly wonderful, kind and altruistic attitudes of your basic good guy.

**DRAWN DIRECTLY**

For the local version, the ugly-beautiful theme came across as a joint effort by three characters who together yielded some of the play's better moments. On the side of beauty, there was Debbie Buresh in the title role, while Cinderella's ugly, ugly sisters were portrayed by Gerry Eggleton and GLT president John Roe.

Debbie was capable as well as attractive in the role of Cinderella, easily comfortable onstage and appropriately lovely in her dazzling white gown ready for Prince Charming's ball. The only possible flaw in the portrayal of Cinderella, arguably, seemed to arise more from the author's insufficient development of the character rather than Debbie's performance.

Providing grotesque foils for Debbie's good looks were Annie from Acton and Nellie of Norval as depicted by the two aforementioned hams Eggleton and Roe, respectively. Switching sex roles is, again, a traditional aspect of the pantomime, and, once outfitted in the multi-layered costumes, borrowed from many diverse periods of woman's history, the two men played it to the hilt. There was, naturally, little of the feminine about Annie and Nellie, bending and slouching with no hint of daintiness, stomping about the stage like a pair of marines and endlessly shrieking in broken falsettos about how appallingly ugly was their harassed sister, Cinderella.

**AMUSED YOUNGSTERS**

Much to the amusement of the many youngsters in the audience, not to mention their incredulous parents, Nellie's frequent bustline problems created the production's best running joke, as Ron Hunt, playing the castle's handyman Buttons, was prevailed upon to help enhance that which nature had merely suggested. With the aid of a bicycle pump, she strives obediently to simultaneously inflate both Nellie's bosom and her ego.

Needless to say, one of the hallmarks pops, Enough said. While Nellie and Annie were both tremendously funny as the ugly sisters, Mr. Roe (as Nellie) deserves a little extra credit for sacrificing his beard so he could better fit the role. He can rest assured that few members of the audience actually thought he was a woman onstage, with or without the beard.

Also switching roles and genders for the play were Tiffany Hamilton and Nancy Waters who portrayed Prince Charming and his servant, Dandini, and even traded those roles in mid-performance as part of a conspiracy within the plot reminiscent of Mark Twain's The Prince and the Pauper. Both roles were serious, once again reflecting their opposites in the play, Annie and Nellie, who were in it strictly for laughs.

**FUNNY LINES**

Ron Hunt as the bellhop-suited Buttons offered numerous funny lines and motions and treated the audience to a quietly entertaining rendition of "On the Sunny Side of the Street".

Mr. Hunt's rendition is termed "quiet" here in order to point out a basic difference between the audience's reaction to such pantomimes in their native England and reactions to a relatively new form of entertainment in this country. Popular songs are incorporated into the plot of the pantomime with the intention of getting an audience involved in an old-style community sing

along. For whatever reasons, there was little singing along to be heard during the local presentation of Cinderella, and the tunes seemed slightly out of place and uncomfortable as a result.

Accomplished musician Ralph Ursel provided organ accompaniment for the tunes and did it well, but it was clear that the real accompaniment probably should have come from the audience.

The same ideas, however, could not be readily applied to Debbie Buresh's singing of "You Light Up My Life," which did not seem intended to get the audience involved. Debbie stood alone onstage and delivered a somewhat reserved reading of the hit song that nevertheless created a moment of poignancy unmatched elsewhere in the play.

Perrianne Waters was a fairly convincing Fairy Godmother who rewarded Cinderella for her kindness by coming up with a hot ticket to the gala ball and wheels to get there. There was a slightly exaggerated phrasing to Perrianne's lines that captured the magical, mystical nature of her character, and her gown was even more dazzling than Cinderella's.

**ENDEARINGLY SIMPLE**

Gord Hunt was endearingly simple as Egbert, the Baron of Ballinad, an easy-going good guy who enjoys practising with his huckle and not getting anywhere. Constantly hen-pecked by the awful Baroness, he ultimately found inner peace at the sight of his beautiful daughter Cinderella about to marry the noble Prince Charming.

As the broker's men - R2 and D2 - Patrick Gaskin and Neil Williams were quite humorous keeping and chattering through their portions of the script like crosses between their electronic namesake from Star Wars and the tin soldiers more commonly found in fairy tales such as Cinderella.

Finally, as a chorus of villagers and courtiers, the entertaining troupe made up of Ruth Allan, Nicola Joyes, Joanne d'Entremont, Carolyn King, Kelly Crawford and Michelle Rowe offered the best of the truly musical moments in the play. With their synchronized singing and dancing, these girls should be considering collective employment as Las Vegas chorines, and their big Mac number could one day be a big, big, TV commercial hit.

As well as producer Enid Williams and the many stage hands and set decorators who worked on Cinderella, writer-director Margaret Eggleton must be commended for a fine success in bringing the Christmas pantomime to Georgetown. Mrs. Eggleton's considerable efforts deserve a special round of applause: it was clear at the end of Cinderella's four-day run that local audiences, regardless of their nationality or background, would welcome more examples of English pantomime during future Christmas seasons.

**Milton Mayor wins**

**Armstrong loses in bid for commission seat**

Hilton Hills regional Council, Mike Armstrong lost his bid to join the Milton Police Commission by one vote last week as regional council chose instead to give Milton a voice on the five-member commission for the first time.

At its informal meeting last Wednesday, council voted unofficially to reappoint Caledonia Mayor Harry Barrett to the commission and elected Milton Mayor Don Gordon to the same body for the 1979-80 term. In the secret ballot, the decision of which must be ratified officially by council today (Wednesday), Mayor Barrett polled 19 votes from among the 24 regional councillors, while Mayor Gordon claimed 14 votes and Coun. Armstrong took 11.

Mayor Gordon effectively weakened Coun. Armstrong's chances of joining the police

commission when he pointed out prior to the voting that Milton has never been directly represented as a municipality on the commission either by an elected or an appointed official.

**ARE PROBLEMS**

"I know there are problems with the regional police force," Mayor Gordon told council. "I don't know whose fault they are, but I know the morale stinks and the facilities are inadequate."

The Milton mayor cited his personal "100 per cent attendance record" at regional and municipal meetings and vowed, if elected to the commission, to help make the Milton police force "number one in Canada."

Coun. Armstrong informed the newer members of council that this was his second request for appointment to the



MIKE ARMSTRONG

commission and stressed that his reasons for seeking the appointment were "not selfish, but very legitimate."

Noting that he has the time to serve on the commission, Coun. Armstrong cited a need for representation on the commission from north Halton and

a need for improved facilities for police personnel. He vowed to do everything in his power to keep the commission's budget under control "at the regional level."

Mayor Barrett reported that he has been a police commissioner since 1973 and last year instigated a review of Halton police problems that is now being conducted by officials of the Ontario Police Commission. The review, he said, is "well overdue."

TOLD COLLEAGUES The Oakville mayor told his colleagues that the commission annually budgets for more than \$9 million worth of expenditures and oversees some 360 employees.

months. He acknowledged that Milton has had no representation, whereas Halton Hills' incumbent representative, Glenn Magnuson of Georgetown, has just been reappointed to another two-year term. "I anticipate major changes so important to the commission that we have to have

experienced personnel who can devote eight to ten hours a week minimum to police work," Mayor Barrett said. As regional council's designated representatives, Mayors Barrett and Gordon will join Mr. Magnuson and other provincial appointees Judge Joseph Seime of Hamilton and Alfred Oliver of Burlington.

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