

Recycled Stockings | Southville Centre

Company create magic for their young audience

A CROWD of parents and young children were waiting expectantly in the surprisingly bare main hall of the Southville Centre when a door sprang open and an extravagantly costumed pirate burst through.

He welcomed the young visitors in suitably ringing tones, and told them they would be taking to the Sea of Adventure in three different ships.

The idea of keeping the audience moving is a sound one, particularly if the majority are young and inclined to fidget if made to sit down for an hour and a half. The audience split into three parts and made their way around the centre to three different locations.

First up was "Nobby, the hard-nosed reindeer" who wanted to usurp the past-his-prime Rudolf to become the Leader of the Pack. Nadia Williams kept the room transfixed as she outlined her plans for world (or Christmas!) domination. Then it was

downstairs to meet multi-talented Kate McNab as the Wicked Witch of the West, complete with broomstick, now having to compete with EasyJet planes as she glided into Southville, dispensing squashed worms and frog slime to the young audience.

The third room contained only a large box, with loud snoring coming from inside. Then a voice insisted "Nobody Panic - I'm a Christmas Present". The children's eyes widened as a large penguin sprang out, telling how he was a present for a young princess.

Then it was back upstairs to meet Captain Hook - but without his hook! Gerard Cooke portrayed Hook in true pantomime style, as "the Buccaneersing Blackguard of Bedminster, the Scourge of Southville". When he turned around, without his extravagant coat, the youngsters delighted in shouting out "it's behind you!", as his hook dangled from his back.

Back to the main hall to find an elegant middle-aged lady (McNab) sitting quietly dressed in pink twin-set and pearls, with her flamboyant ball gown on a dummy beside her. This was Cinderella in her autumn years, who said she had used only her native cunning, not magic, to achieve her goals.

The last act showed a young girl trying to stay awake until midnight to meet Father Christmas, who is worried her parents don't believe in him.

The company kept the magic there for the enthusiastic audience with a balanced mix of invention, laughter and some pathos. Just the thing for a cold winter afternoon.

7/10

Michael Clark