

Slough & South Bucks Express

Rich pickings in Richings

Panto

GOING to see a production by the Richings Players makes me wish I was part of the community.

Richings Park may only be a dot on the map but the amount of talent, imagination, enthusiasm and energy which emanates from its amateur dramatic society productions, is worthy of any big city.

Richings Players' latest production, *The Jewel of Atlantis*, is one such example and an absolute joy from beginning to end. Pantomime in February may be a little late but this one was well worth waiting for. As with other productions, it began even before its audience stepped inside Iver Village Hall. Like many others, no doubt, I quickly walked past the wino on the bench outside, and was till none the wiser when he came into the hall for a bit of warmth, complaining that some people hadn't given him any money. Climbing onto the stage, however, Phil Mison became the Narrator and, discovering a dusty tome, opened it up, settled himself down and, with mannerisms not unlike *Only Fools & Horses'* Boycie, began to tell us the story of how the jewel which powered Atlantis was stolen and recovered, before introducing the characters.

Then the show began, with King Neptune's assistant Giovanni's rendition of *Under The Sea* setting the cracking pace which never gave up from beginning to end. Like so many of the performers, Will Torrent was first class as Giovanni, with a stage presence as big as his character's ego. I liked too, Michael Lucas, and Sarah Deny-Jones as the hip hopping hammerhead sharks from the Bronx - Sarah particularly exuded mischief and attitude; and Warren Palmer as the flirting Nanny was a glorious mix of Vanessa Phelps and Clare Raynor with an infectious giggle thrown in. Paula Harvey as the bookish princess and Kirk Wootton as the arrogant prince, with aspirations to be like Prince

Charles, were also worthy of a mention.

A big hit with everyone were The Beatles, looking remarkably like the real thing and running on every now and then lugging a cardboard yellow submarine and singing an appropriate song. There were so many good things about this feast of fun, colour and entertainment - from the imaginative and detailed sea life costumes made by Linda Lucas, Kathryn Pike, Betty Siddall and Sara Williams, as well as the suits with fins and hands covered up to look like flippers, to Kate Howard's make-up, and Robin Bishops and Alan Oxley's rainbow lighting of the Kingdom of the Sea Sprites, not to mention Flick Caisley's jazzy musicians.

But this particular production wouldn't have been possible without it's co-writers and directors, David Bainbridge and Michael Lucas.

It's because of them that we were introduced to the delightful world of Helga, the evil Russian stingray (Sue McCoan), the Codfather Don Calamari (Adrian Uzzell), his Bar-a-Cuda and his minders, Ronnie and Reggie, the crayfish brothers (12 year olds, Auriol Hatcher & Amy Perry). I can't wait for the next one!

By Clare Brotherwood (Slough Express, Friday 10th February 2006)