

Noda – London Region

Name of Society	The Richings Players
Production	Sinbad the Sailor
Written by	John Morley
Venue	Iver Village Hall
Dates	31 January – 2 February 2008
Regional Rep	Paul Woodstock

Thank you so much for inviting me to offer a critique of Sinbad the Sailor – Steve Jarrett couldn't come as he was called away on business and I was very happy to deputise, particularly as I had reviewed last year's panto.

Your front of house crew made my wife and I most welcome although once again your box office lady was under pressure and could have done with a helping hand. Hence not all the audience were seated in time – the earlier time does suit panto and when the curtain rose just five minutes late off we went at a brilliant pace which hardly dipped at any point. Traditional pantomime does give a director a chance to work with a large cast of all ages and abilities – some were experienced actors and some totally new to the theatre and quite of a lot of in-betweens – so what a challenge for Lotte Fletcher-Jonk in her directorial debut.

I do have to say that John Morley's script and storyline for 'Sinbad the Sailor' (with added up-to-the minute topical local jokes) is great material but what a superb job Lotte did with it. I am already a big fan of her acting ability but on the strength of this debut Lotte has added another string to her bow. At no time did I notice awkward scene changes, or any nervous children looking for family members in the audience. The cast were so well-drilled – their faces and eyes were all focused on the job in hand. Movement on and off the stage was slick and use of the stage was good. We sat right at the back of the hall and we heard absolutely every word spoken and sung.

The opening number 'Everybody needs somebody' was very lively and lifted everybody in the cast and audience to a level of expectation which in nearly every panto I've seen then drops and you wait for the next 'up' number – but not in this panto – oh no it didn't!

'Somebody to love' was again great with lovely harmonies but I didn't like the static semi-circle of cast members. Audience responses and participation were spot on and well controlled, nobody's attention dropped and this year my bum didn't go numb! (must have an extra covering this year)

Noda – London Region

This review is proving very difficult to write as usually a NODA rep will offer constructive criticism, mention some good performances, list the highlights and some of the lowlights. If I tell you that my wife and I went to see a fine professional touring 'Aspects of Love' at Wycombe Swan earlier in the week and we both had a better evening's entertainment at your village hall community pantomime. I'll go as far as to say it's the best show I've seen for a long time. I happened to meet a 'luvvie' friend of mine in the audience (he's a leading man/director/producer) and I double-checked with him that I wasn't looking through rose tinted glasses – he concurred it was a terrific evening's entertainment and was most impressed.

Stage management was inconspicuous and very well handled – lighting and sound extremely competent (great thunder and lighting effect!!), lighting of the grotto was very effective. Set design and construction was brilliant this year – it was different to the usual set but it worked so very well. Costumes were great (particularly the dame's outfits!) Hair and makeup were just about perfect – particularly the young ladies (muses?) who took a lot of trouble to change their styles – it worked.

Programme design was good and told us everything.

Sophie Torrent's choreography was very well performed and well conceived – just right – particularly in 'Got my life'.

Musical arrangement/direction by Flick and Marg was very very good – and the band performed beautifully – sound was very well balanced. Also each song was just about the right length – didn't drag at all!

'Now the boat is all afloat' was exceptional, 'You're the one that I want' great, 'Miss you like crazy' very well sung. 'Don't worry, be happy' nice. 'This is it' again, boringly brilliant!

A special mention must go to the superb 'birds' costumes at the start of Act II – well done.

Roc bird effect was also very effective . The fight scene was well planned and executed. The shrine of love was impressive and well lit.

All the terrific jokes worked well (with one exception – sea-men fell flat and was unnecessary) and the cast worked very well together, particularly Warren and Joe , very funny with great comic timing.

As far as individual notes for the cast are concerned I am going to refrain from mentioning individuals - don't be disappointed – it's just that I'm running out

stephen.jarrett@btconnect.com tel - 01494 757013 fax 01494 757014 mobile 07885 825079
Birch Grove, Oak Lane, Braziers End, Chesham, Bucks. HP5 2UL

Support Rep: paul.woodstock@hotmail.com tel – 01494 771840 mobile 07973 858248
3 Letchfield, Ley Hill, Chesham, Bucks. HP5 3QU

Noda – London Region

of superlatives! You all, without exception, performed beautifully – principals and ensemble, young and old. Great projection – nice positive well-delivered lines, waiting for the jokes to sink in – well maintained pace – very good cue bite. Suitably well cast and well acted – just one mention for probably the finest pantomime dame I've seen – Warren – just superb!

In conclusion, just about the best non professional performance I've ever seen – a terrific evening out. A credit to the director and players, a credit to all the team backstage, technically spot on - the audience loved it (nobody fell asleep!) It was well selected and adapted, brilliantly performed and a terrific introduction to the theatre for all the youngsters on stage and in the audience.

I've said it before I know but this is what local community theatre is all about.

Very well done Richings Players.

Thanks for asking us along and I wish you well for your future productions – please accept my sincere apologies for the slight delay in sending this report.

Paul Woodstock
NODA Support Rep