Show: SHREK THE MUSICAL
Society: Trinity Drama Productions
Venue: TRINITY CONCERT HALL
Credits: David Lindsay-Abaire/Jeanine Tesori
Type: Sardines
Author: Chris Abbott
Performance Date: 02/12/2021

Shrek the Musical

Chris Abbott | 03 Dec 2021 18:31pm

★★★★☆

Putting on any school production is a major task, and to do so involving an enormous cast, a full orchestra and to a high standard is a great achievement. Well done, then, to Director Chris Chambers and all the team behind the Trinity School production of Shrek the Musical. It helped, of course, that the school has a well-equipped and comfortable concert hall with a large stage, but none of that would have been enough without a talented cast.

With a cast of around 60 and a large orchestra, it is impossible to mention more than a few names. In the lead role, Ethan Thorne (alternating with Barney Sayburn) has a relaxed approach that suits the character (though saddled with a rather misshapen fat suit) and a Scots accent that is probably better than that adopted by Mike Myers in the original film. Opposite him as Fiona is Eliza Farrar (alternating with Anna Brovko), who has a sweet singing voice and copes well with the choreography. The double-casting of these two main roles was just one example of the thought put into this production by a school that is well used to performances of all kinds.
As Donkey (no alternate so I hope he keeps well) is Ashvin Jayanandhan, in a portrayal which was all the more impressive for not attempting to copy the original. He is a confident performer with great stage presence, knows how to sell a song, and gave every sign of enjoying the role, which always helps. The other key role is that of Lord Farquaad, to which Matteo Di Lorenzo brought a nicely understated approach and great attention to detail, as well as some of the best costumes of the evening.

Around these three key performers were a vast number of young people of all ages in parts large and small. Among those who caught the eye early on was Lucy Pritchard as Young Fiona. She totally owned the stage, especially when she sang, and already has the skill to put a song over with verve, vigour and clarity. Also making the most of his chance to sing was Jonah Newlands as Pinocchio, who was not afraid to command the stage. George Nearn Stuart is an excellent dancer as the Pied Piper, although the chorus behind him looked rather less comfortable in their tap shoes. Phoebe Nichols as Gingy has a great blues voice, and Tweedledum and Tweedledee (Robert Green and Kiaro King) had little to do but did it with style and energy.

If there was a prize for getting the most audience attention from the smallest part, it would undoubtedly be won by Alexander Molony as the more than slightly tipsy Bishop; a lovely portrayal that was kept up even when his moment was over, staying (just) the right side of upstaging everyone else. The whole cast were colourfully costumed and this, together with wigs, was a real strength of the production. Lighting and FX too contributed greatly, and it was good to see school students in backstage roles as well as in the cast.

Leaving the orchestra under Musical Director Ralph Barlow till last seems appropriate since the music is a vital part of a show like Shrek, and of course Trinity has a musical reputation that raised expectations. These were more than met since this was a superb orchestra, almost all the players being students, as disciplined as they were talented. They were the core of the show, and the cast gave it the necessary heart: well done to all concerned. A great achievement.

The retiring collection was in aid of the school's Malawi Project Christmas Appeal.