

## **THE LION, THE WITCH & THE WARDROBE**

Alistair Brown always gives plays a new and exciting twist – and this Theresa Heskins adaptation was certainly different.

The use of a revolve to ring the scene changes worked incredibly well – as there are more scenes in this play than I've seen for a long time! – so with one of main bugbears being blackouts and long scene changes, this production pleased my eyes and senses. I loved the way the stone table was lowered gently onto the rostrum.

Technically there was so much content – the eerie and imaginative lighting from Fred Rayment, which created so many different looks and feels to the piece, and the atmospheric music was a good background, although it was a little loud at times, and I found the actors were sometimes difficult to hear, which is so unusual at the Rep – their projection is normally second to none – but the balance wasn't 100%.

I did feel that perhaps at times the stage was a little too busy, too many people and too much going on – it seemed a bit manic occasionally, but that said I liked the concept of taking an old favourite and doing it with a new twist, it just seemed a bit too much at times.

The part where the lib was talking about it always being winter, was a super effect with the snow and lighting – really beautiful.

Costumes and makeup were good – particularly liked the White Witch, Tumnus and Beavers makeup – the masks were very good as well.

I loved Peter Carter-Brown's Aslan the Lion – he was leonine in his bearing, gave plenty of contrasts, was charismatic with loads of expression, and showed some very athletic moves around the stage – also a super gold cape!

Phil Baker was the charming Professor – quite quizzical but caring – and I liked his take on Father Christmas, beautiful robes – however I believe the words said something about long white beard – which was not there, and might have confused some of the younger audience members. I would have liked to have seen even a small nod to convention there.

I particularly liked Jenna Ryder-Oliver and Terry Hooper as the Chorus – they perfected some super moves, with energy and inventiveness, which is part of Lynette Driver's choreographic detail.

Jenna also created a lovely character as the strait-laced Mrs McCready.

Jaymes Sygrove always stays true to his character throughout and was a thoroughly good Tumnus, always great attention to detail.

Angela Goss gave us a very haughty and wicked White Witch – loved the makeup and wig – it all melded into the portrayal, however for me – as she was called the White Witch, I would have liked to have seen a predominantly white dress – but that's just my need for the overall look.

Joe Hawkins was a very forceful Mawgrim, I liked the way he attacked the lib, with Ralph Gough and Susan Young as Mr & Mrs Beaver, creating a very charming couple.

Jo Collett was mother and narrator, along with Peter and Phil – they kept the action moving, although again I found some of their lib difficult to hear – I wonder if it was something to do with that side of the stage.

Then we come to the Children – Lucy, Peter, Edmund and Susan. Probably a good ploy to use adults, and once one got used to them it worked well. I think probably Jenny McDonald as Lucy got the child-like quality best of the four, whilst Kim Albone as Susan was the older sister, giving us a happy-go-lucky and more responsible young person as a good contrast to Lucy. Luke Howard showed good acting skills as Peter, and Anthony Bird was the rebellious Edmund. I would have liked a little more rebellion from Anthony – there wasn't quite enough contrast for me between his original revolt against the establishment and his change of heart, when he became part of the family again. Luke was a little overshadowed by the two girls – but came into his own when he took part in the fight scenes, and was able to show more aggression.

I had a small problem with Kim's hair – very nice, except for the long bits hanging down either side of her face – it would not have been the style in those days – and her shoes were not a child's shoes of that era. The other costumes for the youngsters were good.

So – overall I found it fascinating and fantastical – super technically, with some good performances but a little too busy in some places, and I must admit I hankered after the charm of the original version on occasions!

**Nova Horley**