

## THEATRE REVIEW – THE FLINT STREET NATIVITY – HECKINGTON PLAYERS ADS

Saturday afternoon saw myself, wife and daughter making the short trip to Heckington village hall to see The Flint Street Nativity, performed by Heckington players, and a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon it was too!

The play, written by Tim Firth is a depiction of a Nativity play performed in a Junior School, but the roles of the children played by adults. The action starts with the preparations for the show, leading to the final stage performance which of course culminates in calamity!

On taking our seats some 15 minutes or so before curtain up, we were treated to the sight of the cast already being on stage in a state of 'play' every now and again running from the stage in panic shouting "Stranger Danger", a very innovative and entertaining beginning.

Tim Firth has written some fantastic stuff in his time, Calendar Girls being possibly the Jewel in his back catalogue but this script, with its innovative take on casting adults as children, and an adult perspective on what children see and hear in the adult world is very good.

The set was well built and excellently decorated as a primary classroom, and the use of the minimal space available was very good. The quiet area for the naughty Innkeeper pre show was very good and the use of the apron for other parts of the show to allow for set changes on stage was great and very well done.

The cast performed the play admirably, and the actors managed to portray the individualities and quirks of their child alter egos very well. They were all believable in their roles and I could easily visualize each one as children. The action was also accompanied by some lovely keyboard and singing that was all very well-rehearsed and delivered. Again the nuances of kids came through to great comedic effect in the adult cast.

Every member of the cast performed extremely well and the characterization and delivery was top notch. The interplay between Laura Griffins Mary as the goody two shoes Mary with the reluctant Gabriel Rachel Rowett was as funny, as was Rachels constant falling out and periods of "we are not speaking to you" was poignant, as it seemed so much more cruel coming from an adult. Stuart Wyle excelled as the naughty boy and Innkeeper and his telling Mary and Joseph "You can come in, but you can bugger off" was great; as was his opening the door with a green torch on his face accompanied by some creepy sound effects.

Amy Ash was great as Wise Gold, and Aaron Pettican as the star with the space fixation with his Uncle (father) in the audience was very funny. His run around the back of the stage was a highlight. Charlotte Shearsby was funny and poised as an angel, unlike Brett Moore who in playing the Ass was hilarious with his cardboard head and "Willies" song. I also very much enjoyed Godfrey Barlows Question of Sport moments, and his not knowing his lines and smiling at his family in the audience.

Jo Warrick as the Sheperd was really funny and a great save when Jesus lost his head and asking the audience member to just "Pass me Jesus's head will you love". Cullum Thursby was also assured as Frankenshit boy and his scene with the Ass was a treat.

Kei Bailey delivered a fantastic performance as the narrator. The emotion showed by him during the scenes involving his parents breaking up was very moving, and his initial entrance at the beginning of the nativity, with a silly smile and creepy expression cracked up the whole audience.

Flint Street nativity was extremely funny, but it also showed a lot of very complex and emotive subjects surrounding the fears and worries of children, and how the lives of adults can cause so much pain to them. The music in this production tied everything together and the cast explored the emotions conveyed by the music wonderfully.

Lastly, Director Collette Buchanan-Gray has done a fine job. It was obvious that the cast had absolute confidence in their jobs and lines/blocking/lights/sound were all confidently done. There was no empty stage time and no awkward silences that can accompany some amateur theatre production. Well done Col!

All in all an afternoon well spent and I will certainly be attending more shows by this great company of performers.

Andrew Rudd