

## NODA REVIEW

### **A CHRISTMAS CAROL**

by Shaun Sutton from a story by Charles Dickens.

Directed by Vaughan Moll

Performed by Viva!

The story of Scrooge's conversion from miserliness to benevolence I will not repeat for you. The Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future will not come as news so I would rather dwell on the excellent adaptation by Shaun Sutton of this famous and to many favourite, Christmas story.

Moving from their usual venue of The Brook to the nave of St Andrew's Church Soham provided Viva with the challenge of an even smaller acting area than usual. However, the area was used well and when there was a need to overflow for dances etc. the main aisle was used to good effect. Compliments to the stage crew and all involved with the technical support. The acting area was well lit and the scenic projection on the backdrop worked well. Costumes were excellent and worn with style. Compliments to **David Moat**, the make-up design for Jacob Marley was exceptional.

There were some fine performances amongst this large cast. The script calls for around forty actors but by using doubling director Vaughan Moll managed with a couple of dozen and very well too. There was much humour in the text and this was brought out well throughout, particularly in the exuberant Fezziwig scene with **Joshua Schumann** larger than life and full of punch as Fezziwig.

I very much enjoyed the performance of **Rowan Maulder** as Bob Cratchit which was excellent. Nice empathy with Scrooge's nephew and suitably chastened by Scrooge. The scene in the Cratchit's home was well done with great support from **Mary Barnes** as Mrs Cratchit and all the Cratchit children (**Max Moll, Lola MacDonald, Maverick Brookes, Sienna Warder, Kate Weekes**). It was full of warmth and caught the essence of what A Christmas Carol is all about. We were also treated to a couple of very nice scenes from **Scott Robertson** as Fred who again showed good empathy with Cratchit, his stage wife Agnes (**Kirsten Martin**) and, of course, Scrooge. A fine performance.

Scrooge's first ghost that of Jacob Marley, perfectly played by **David Moat**, got the visitations off to a strong start in an excellent scene with Scrooge. Then the Spirits of Christmas Past, Present and Future came visiting as predicted. **Lizi Nicholson** was grand as the Spirit of Christmas Past. Suitably ethereal with a nice confident delivery. The Spirit of Christmas Present however (played by **Phil Logan**) who is traditionally portrayed as rather jolly and enthusiastic, was a bit lightweight to my liking. The Spirit of Christmas to Come (Scott Robertson in a second role) looked suitably creepy and did a lot of nice pointing! The Ensemble gave excellent support throughout augmented by some lovely singing which helped to cover the scene changes but which was a pleasure in itself.

Now we come to the performance of the evening. That of **David Tickner** as Scrooge. This was a brilliant portrayal of this miserly character. Without falling into the trap of reproducing the performances of other actors who have portrayed him on stage and screen, this Scrooge was as irascible as he should be but with the addition of a dry and slightly comedic wit which worked well. A bravura performance.

This was a lovely enjoyable evening which not only reminded us of Dickens' wonderful story but also that charity and kindness doesn't go amiss.

Thanks Viva for another fine production. Just the tonic for getting us into the Christmas spirit.

Julie Petrucci

Regional Representative NODA East District Four South.