

The Dreaming

What's in a wish? The shark-finned music of Howard Goodall, the book and zestful lyrics of Charles Hart, the direction of someone who knows because he's been doing for more decades than he'd care to remember, way back to that first performance of Joseph back in what must feel like the 1800s, Jeremy James Taylor.

Add the highest production standards demanded by producers Dan Schumann from Viva and Nick Huntington, whose *Les Mis* still burns bright in the summer's night. Throw in the witty, demanding "bet you didn't see that coming" choreography of Chris Cumming and Jess Clifford, the tighter than a tantrum musical direction of Richard Hayward and Alexander Goodwin.

And still you won't have enough to remember the evening by because there really was magic in the air because that entire creative team, together with musicians and stage managers and set painters and wardrobe magicians weren't on their own in their glory of a memorable evening.

Because nothing happens without a cast that exceeded the impossible and brought love and life and desire to a four-hundred-year-old idea by a bloke called Shakespeare. And he knew a thing or two about love as well.

That lovers will always be blind and be blinded. Oberon and Titania, in this mesmerising reimagining of one of the world's best-known plays, are transformed into Angel and Sylvia, and they rule their early 20th century woodlands with the cunning help, not of Puck, but of Jack. Jack the lad. Jack, who'll always get you out of a hole, trustworthy and as deft as a pencil. Corbin Abassi's Jack was canny, knowing, fleet of foot and firm of purpose and he bestrode the night-time set like an elf on fire. His rendition of Thursday's Children offered an electric start to a beautiful evening. Jordan Thorpe as Angel was always in command and the Sylvia of Eloise George pulled no punches in her determination to undermine Angel whenever possible.

The brightness of the chorus – girl woodlanders and boy woodlanders – shone hard. They moved and breathed as one, providing that all-important substance that the director allowed them to prove that any one of them could hold the audience at any time. And they did, in their droves, and their ensemble work was a credit to their determination and vigour.

The mechanicals became the villagers, Mummerset accents all, turning the story of Pyramus and Thisbe into the timeless tale of Saint George and his fight against the dragon, heartfelt when set amongst the realisation that the war to end all wars was just around the corner and any one of them may not return. The best comedy of the evening came from excellent performance from all of them, especially Ben Clark as Nick Cheek. This is the Bottom replacement and Cheek's cavorting as a goat was quite simply masterful and superbly timed.

The lovers. Oh dear. It's always the lovers who get the rough end of the stick while everyone else is floating around going oooh it's a magical tale isn't it. But all four were unforgettable. For perfection it had to be the routine that accompanied the astonishing Midsummer Madness as timing and singing and spacing and artfulness combined in several minutes that made everything possible.

This was an epic evening and a magnificent tribute to that ideal that says that all you need to do is to wish. *The Dreaming* is ours, there for the taking before it dissolves again into the dark and impossible night sky.