

Centenary Hit

With no less than twenty-two separate scenes, a cast of 60 wearing over 90 costumes between them, Painswick Players, under the Director Alistair Anderson, entertained no fewer than 351 people over four performances to The Centenary Music Hall in Edwardian Style last month. Everyone who enjoyed the occasion will be carrying memories to last for a very long time indeed.

The Players, without exception, projected a new maturity in this production, characterised by a real sense of team spirit. Painswick, and that must include the Players, has much talent and many outstanding 'characters'. Blending that character and talent with others to create a spectacle, to amuse, to hold an audience in awe, requires a selflessness which has the effect of raising the collective impact upon an audience, and this was moved close to the ideal in this production. One is not confining that appraisal solely to the 60 or so performers - the front-of-house and backstage tasks were managed in a manner which helped greatly in setting the Edwardian scene; whether being greeted on arrival, brought supper in the interval, devising the layout of the programme, operating with precision the lighting plot, the wardrobe, or accompanying with live music, each contributed to our experience in the Painswick (Institute) Centre.

To make mention here of individuals could be quite iniquitous. That said, others who also enjoyed the production enormously may well feel that Alistair's positive direction required, and received, the services of a quite outstanding Master of Ceremonies in Roy 'The Voice' Wellbourn, his first time on stage for more than 20 years and his first shot at compere-ing anything. The entire production was brought even closer to the hearts of all present by the youngest members of the Company - every single YIPPIE - who caught and retained the attention of the audience and were rightly acknowledged by thunderous applause.

We were treated to a first class show, by first class performers. They have laid down yet another standard within their eighty years of existence which, if maintained, enhances still further an institution of which the village will continue to be proud. Well done!

LWB



Ode Time Music Hall

Excitement abounds on the ninth of December
A night of enjoyment, a night to remember
Stars brightly shine, Jack Frost in the air
Winter is coming and Christmas is near.

To the Centre of Painswick, folk make their way,
A hundred years on from that first Centre day.
Marking the moment a Grand Music Hall
Arranged by the PeePees, the YIPPIes and all.

Coats, hats and gloves are hastily shed;
Guests sit at tables and wait to be fed.
Bunting festoons the bright tinselled hall
The audience awaits the first curtain call.

Hair parted, moustached with gavel in hand,
The M.C. directs audience, players and band.
The curtains draw back to a full throated chorus.
A pageant of history is laid out before us.

Tappers and Flappers and Cider with Rosie,
Solos, duets and an Opening Ceremony,
Offenbach's Gendarmes and buttons and bows,
Maid of the Mountains and GI Joes.

Among the ensemble, two vicars or three,
Enough to give blessings to you and to me.
A dressing gowned vicar helps Chris with his
prayers
While another young man reflects on the stairs.

The interval comes, bread and cheese is brought
out,
Friends and neighbours are greeted and agree it's
a rout.
Finkelstein's frolics keep us amazed
As a thunderous mortar is wheeled on the stage.

We wondered, what next? We were all held in thrall
For a volunteer YIPPIe was Fink's cannonball.
Into the mouth of the mortar hopped he,
Cheerfully, joyfully, one, two, three.

Disappearing from view to loud acclamation
Bang, smoke and flashes: complete devastation.
Up through the roof, up through the tiles
Out into orbit for miles upon miles.

Returning at last with a thump like a bomb,
He picked himself up with regal aplomb,
Brushed himself down, slicked back his hair,
Ascended the stage, just glad to be there.

Too soon came the end of this musical treat,
The final tableau brings us all to our feet.
It was back to the start - yes, 1907
Just a century ago? It seemed like heaven.

It was Faith, Hope and Glory. The M.C. called
time
We sang round the homeland, we sang Auld Lang
Syne.
Crowds cheered, flags waved as in the good days
of yore
Seven years later, we all were at war.

What to do now though in two thousand and six?
Sweep up the floor, stack up the chairs, wash up
the crocks, pick up the sticks:
No more to be said;
Home, hot water bottle, night cap...and bed

Pat Daly



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