

British Theatre Guide

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Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

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Those Magic Beans

The Stag Theatre, Sevenoaks

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First seen as a pantomime in the mid 20th century, *Snow White* has undergone many a transformation as writers attempt to render the tale into traditional Christmas fare. For their ninth pantomime at the Stag Theatre, Sevenoaks, Those Magic Beans present their first Dame-less production, playing with the genre and embracing a recent trend in the role of the Magic Mirror.

Most frequently seen as a projected image, the Mirror is becoming ever-increasingly cast as the show's Immortal. When Lionel Blair played the role in the 1990s, the part blended Comic and Immortal and allowed Blair's showmanship to shine through. Fast forward to 2013 and Gok Wan's pantomime debut in Birmingham, and the role has taken on new meaning in a post-millennial society.

In Sevenoaks, glitter-bearded drag act Danny Beard's Magical Mirror descends from the heavens in sparkling glory to advise the Wicked Queen and act as the purveyor of beauty. With no Dame in the production, Beard provides glamour, sass and quick-witted quips as well as some much needed energy in a show that begins extremely sluggishly.

Anarchy and comedy are two of pantomime's most important staples, both of which are sorely lacking in this year's production. In dispensing with the Dame, Ed Petrie's Muddles has no sparring partner. One of the genre's joys is the relationship between Comic and Dame and their constant put-downs, slapstick and affection.

Bereft of this, Muddles is often isolated and a "12 Days of Christmas" sequence between him, Bob Carolgees's Holden the Henchman and Jasette Amos's Wicked Queen appears more choreographed than crazy, with the humour arising from them struggling to get through the number, rather than mischievously moving each other's props and thus contributing to the set-piece's playful anarchic nature.

But, whilst certain parts of the show lack pace, others rush through the narrative at breakneck speed. Snow White's woodland sequence in which Holden and Muddles attempt to dispose of her is almost over in an instant, and the Wicked Queen's transformation into an old hag glossed over as if unimportant.

It is also somewhat bemusing that, after ending up in the Seven Dwarfs' cottage, Snow White is subsequently visited by the Prince, Magical Mirror, Muddles and Holden. Whilst this does make it more understandable as to why Snow White keeps opening the door despite the Dwarfs' advice, it makes one question why the fabulous foursome don't take it in turns to watch over her and prepare to battle the Wicked Queen as soon as she comes a knocking? And, whilst entertaining, their

rendition of "You Gotta Get a Gimmick" to remind Snow White not to open the door makes no sense whatsoever.

The Sevenoaks pantomime is known for its strong use of music and this year is no exception with a George Michael medley ending act one ensuring everyone leaves for the interval on a high. Unfortunately, sound level issues plague the production often making it difficult to hear the lyrics of a fine-voiced cast including Sapphire Elia's Snow White and Keith Jack's Prince Ferdinand.

Mike Coltman's dwarf puppets work extremely well in bringing Snow White's friends to life with Simon Cossons's digital scenery evoking snowy landscapes and scary castle interiors.

Whilst visually stunning, *Snow White* requires more pace and anarchy to lift it from being a fairytale with pantomimic elements to becoming a full-blown pantomime. To do so, the script also needs attention as jokes about Harvey Weinstein and Kevin Spacey's sexual misconduct have no place in a family-friendly festive show.

Reviewer: [Simon Sladen](#)