

British Theatre Guide

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Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

Eric Potts

First Family Entertainment

Opera House, Manchester

(2010)

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs is one of the most popular of all fairytales. This retelling has a judicious mix of the spirit of the Grimm Brothers' original and a huge and surprisingly welcome dollop of Disney. The basic story is well known. Queen Morgiana banishes her stepdaughter Snow White as she believes her to be her rival for the title of most beautiful woman in the land. When abandoned in the forest, Snow White is discovered by some helpful dwarfs who give her shelter. Her stepmother transforms herself into an old crone and tempts Snow White with a poisoned apple. The resulting comatose princess can only be awakened by the kiss of a prince which, after various further adventures, duly happens. All ends happily and good triumphs over evil.

This pantomime is every bit as entertaining as we have come to expect from writer Eric Potts and First Family entertainment. The script has plenty of local references along with digs at politicians and plenty of daft puns. Television's *Emmerdale* provides two of the stars in Deena Payne as a glamorous Wicked Queen Morgiana and Andy Devine as her dour evil henchman Herman.

Both acquit themselves with honour. Deena moves very well and her performance is a successful blend of playing up to the boos and hisses of the audience with the occasional very knowing comic aside. She is alternately evil and funny. Andy Devine also makes a good connection with the audience and much humour is extracted from references to *Emmerdale*'s Woolpack Inn.

Tina O'Brien makes a strong return to the Opera House and pantomime. She was a memorable Cinderella there in [2007](#) and has even more poise and warmth than the previous occasion. Once again her foil is local radio presenter Mike Toolan whose Prince takes himself seriously but not too seriously.

Though these two worked well together the performer who made the biggest impact was Tam Ryan as the Buttons character, here called Muddles. Whether encouraging the audience to shout out when he appeared or offering a range of silly walks and grimaces he made the evening flow whenever he was on stage. There was much enjoyable illusion from Jonathan Shotton as the Queen's conjuror.

This pantomime really did what you want from the genre. There were plenty of "oh yes it is : oh no it isn't" moments. The voice in the talking mirror on the wall sequence was that of the writer. Although Eric Potts usually provides a magnificent dame, the fact that this show did not have such a character did not detract from the fun.

Despite the two Disney favourites in the show, "Whistle while you work" and "Hi Ho", these dwarfs had different names to those from the classic animation. All worked well together but Danny Blackner as Loopy put this reviewer in mind of the late Stan Laurel. His comic timing and reactions

were of a very high order. The traditional communal singing was combined with the children on the stage routine. All four of these children seemed to be enjoying the laughter they were encouraged to share and again Tam Ryan kept the scene just the right side of sickly sweet.

The sets were of the usual high standard and there was much effective use of gauzes to reveal and hide characters at appropriate moments. There was even a rather unexpectedly funky dance when Morgiana brewed up the powerful potion to disguise herself. The Thriller style routine with zombie like creatures in the forest was equally accomplished.

The costumes were colourful: Morgiana had various elaborate tiaras and flowing sleeves.

The principals' singing was pleasant although Tam Ryan had the best voice on the stage. The dance routines created satisfying stage pictures.

The warmth in this production contrasted with the temperature outside and made it a grand family night out. Director Warwick Davis has conjured up a magical confection which hugely entertained the justifiably packed Opera House.

Reviewer: [Andrew Edwards](#)