

Into the Woods

Yeovil Amateur Operatic Society
Westlands Entertainment Venue
Friday October 20th, 2023

Somerset Fellowship of Drama – David Beach Competition

Introduction

I have been an adjudicator with the SFoD for ten years and this is the first time I have had the pleasure in adjudicating *Into the Woods*. Having played the Mysterious Man in a production a few years ago and having seen the original London production with Julia McKenzie, Imelda Staunton, Jacqueline Dankworth and Clive Carter, to name just a few, it is a show I have long since admired and although the film version wasn't to everyone's taste – I enjoyed that too.

If that wasn't enough – we arrived in Yeovil early and enjoyed sausage and chips in *Palmer's Fish and Chip Shop* car park before the show. I guess you will all know that Palmers is enough to put anyone in a good mood.

If I may, I would just like to begin by endeavouring to differentiate between the eye of an audience member and that of an adjudicator – whose role is to compare and contrast numerous productions within the framework of a competition. Without wishing to pre-empt any of the comments within this adjudication it is worth remembering that the opinion of an audience member is one thing - and the view of a regular adjudicator who endeavours to conclude comparative scales of achievement - is quite another.

If, in any walk of life, someone achieves 92% when those around them achieve 80% they would be classed as a winner in anyone's book.

Surely with 92% they would be classed as a winner irrespective of anyone else's score? The answer to that is – yes, absolutely.

But what if the competitor scored 94%?

Does this detract from the amazing score of 92% ...or what led to the score?
In my book – absolutely NOT.

Many members of amateur groups support other societies within a geographical area – and many never go and see other group's shows at all.

Adjudicators and moderators have the benefit of being able to see all the entries within a competition.

And what a joy that is – enabling comparisons to be made whilst enjoying and supporting the significant range of musical theatre presented in the wider Somerset area.

Choice of Show

I can absolutely understand why *Into the Woods* might be on the bucket list of any musical theatre director. If I had been invited to direct, it might have proven just one step too challenging for me - and so I think it worth commenting that not only the director but the entire production team – and the selection of the show by the YAOS general committee – should all be congratulated in allowing and making this production happen. By the time you read this – and with your sights on Oklahoma! – you will have no doubt fully appreciated not only what a huge undertaking *Into the Woods* was ...but also what an amazing achievement for YAOS and all involved in the production it turned out to be.

It was a brave choice – comparatively unknown to your average audience member, with a large ensemble cast – *none of whom* can be *carried* – and of course – a seemingly impossible score.

So, was *Into the Woods* a good choice for YAOS with all the work it involved? Hell yes – you brave fools! – I really, really enjoyed it.

Auditorium Pre-set & Welcome

Your team of FOH volunteers are exceptional. I have had the pleasure of being greeted by them on six occasions – including the Covid devastated *Sound of Music* – and they really do stand out across the region as the best of the best. Westlands is a bit of a mixed bag as a venue for YAOS. The seating isn't perfect and the lack of a rake in the front part of the auditorium isn't brilliant if you're not very tall.

Not a problem for me as we sat in the raised area and had a great view.

The composite set had been simply laid out in readiness for the opening number with dimly lit areas to entice us with what was to come – I liked the foliage twisted on the sides of the raised seating area and the fairytale approach to the set design – much of the painting could be seen in the preset as being almost story book illustration - and this was a good approach.

Direction

This was a well-directed show which flowed, held our interest, and gave many moments that were inspired.

Little Red Riding Hood's singing with her mouth full made me laugh out loud – brilliant. It was notable that the characters not directly involved in dialogue were still *absolutely directly involved* in the scenes.

Something not always easy to maintain and requires constant monitoring by the director. Much of the characterisations probably came from the experienced performers but I am sure much of the quirkiness of the characters would have been developed and suggested by the director. You will know.

It sometimes might seem a bit dismissive of the efforts and talents of the director to talk about the experience and talents of the actors. But when you have an ensemble made up of talented principal players – who are delighted to play the lead in one show and then a supporting role in another – it ensures the quality of the ensemble is as near professional as you can get in the amdram world. Virtually every member of the ensemble here is a principal player – and it showed.

I think I would have been happy to have just been a tree in amongst you all. Without doubt the use of the wide stage was really good using all the multi-levels and with the various locations suggested well. The groupings were always good and the focus of the action really well judged when the stage was more crowded. I never had to *look* for where the dialogue was being delivered from which can often happen on a busy stage with the spoken word always coming from the speakers in the rafters! There is no specific credit in the programme for choreography and whilst I appreciate that *Into the Woods* isn't really a *dance show* there were definitely many opportunities for specific placings, postured movement which was very much choreographed to the music, and all executed very well. I would guess that perhaps Sheila was part of this aspect and therefore – of course – very well taught and well-rehearsed. I loved the movement of the three groups in the *Happy Ever After* number – so accurately presented.

I think overall that the casting of such a strong ensemble must have made the job of the director a little easier although I absolutely appreciate the effort, time and energy that is required by the director to undertake a show of this complexity and content.

Both Tash and Sheila will surely look back on this production with great pride and affection.

As, no doubt, will the entire team at YAOS involved with probably one of their most challenging productions to date.

I wonder if some of the all too small audience might have found the production somewhat less engaging? – there are always those who would have perhaps loved *Top Hat* and *Anything Goes* ...but would have been completely bewildered by *Into the Woods*!

Ringling the changes with directors is something that some societies don't do.

In my view introducing new shows, new directors and welcoming new members keeps amdram and societies thriving – and keeps your membership engaged and enthused to continue being a part of it all.

And keeps your audiences returning.

Set Design

The set design – *on the face of it* – may appear to many of the audience as being quite simple. It wasn't.

The construction of levels, ramps, the tower, the trees and all the trucks took great thought and effort and were rightly styled as *story book illustrations*. For example, the painting of the tower stonework was exactly this – *not architecturally accurate* but beautifully *impressionistic*... and therefore *just right*.

The trucks for Jack's house and the Baker's house were also perfectly designed to represent the locations without being too big to construct or handle.

The removal of the foliage from the trees in Act II was a clever move suggesting the deterioration of the environment as everything degenerates in Fairytale Land and in the lives of the characters.

The painting of the cyclorama (I wasn't sure if this was the wall or a cloth from where I was sitting) was really simple in its appearance and looked like a Bob Ross painting. It really responded well to the various lighting states – sometimes blending into the background and then often taking us into the woods with depth.

Many congratulations to Kate Chidley who gave the scenic aspect such consistency.

Granny's bed (maybe you thought of it as a prop rather than part of the set?) was great fun, necessarily robust and really effective.

The *apparent* simplicity of the set enabled the story to be very much character (and actor) led and given the strength of the ensemble this was what made the production very engaging and retained the audience interest throughout.

All good I say.

Stage Management

I hadn't been to Westlands before and it's always good to see different styles of presentation in new venues.

It's not like presenting a show at the Octagon or the Bristol Hippodrome ...and for you as a visiting society it must present a huge range of additional challenges. None more so than for the backstage team.

I am thinking there is very limited backstage space for the cast and all the trucks and props that were needed. The SM function was faultless as far as I could tell...I know often it's manic backstage ...but from the auditorium everything seemed to flow really well. The trucks weren't huge, but they needed rehearsed handling and the crew who came on to do this, did so really well.

We've all watched the end credits of a film and been aghast at the number of people on the credits list and the range of *jobs* undertaken – many of which we don't even know what they are!

I felt a bit like this as I reviewed the programme and realised that the number of people involved in this production that were not playing characters – exceeded the ensemble number *several times over*. It is typical for your *general audience* to appreciate only those appearing on stage.

I take my hat off to all of those named on the Production Team list in the programme – not least of all the backstage workers who are perhaps far more *irreplaceable* than any of the cast?

Props

There were so many props in this production that really helped to bring the action to life. Some may have been made by yourselves – others acquired. In any event they have to be made or sourced, rehearsed with, stored, and prepared in the wings – be in the right place – and returned to the right place for the next performance. I am always impressed with the props in a show like this but more impressed with the props team and their attention to detail and organisational skills!

There were many personal props which were absolutely perfect.

Even seemingly simple things like the Baker's bag. So right for the character and costume – not just *any bag* picked up in a charity shop – or was it?

Granny's bed, the house stuff for Jack's mother and the Baker – the lovely golden harp – the matching walking sticks for the sisters – the staff for the Witch and the one for the Steward – the fans for Cinderella's step-family – to name just a few.

And of course, Milky White. What an amazing project for Alex and John – and what a professional and perfect result.

Well done to the entire props team – very impressive.

Sound

Having never been to Westlands before I found the sound system a little *untheatrical* – it wasn't that I couldn't hear – I absolutely could hear pretty much every word – but I think for me the volume was just too low to give a real *sense of the theatre*.

This may have been a deliberate decision because of the complexity of the lyrics – or it may have been that the acoustics of the ballroom aren't brilliant ...or the speakers aren't designed for *theatre*?

But whatever the reason, it left me with a sense of a lack of *oomph* from the sound aspect of the production overall.

For me the biggest differentiator between amateur and professional productions is often the quality and balance of the sound and whilst it is difficult to exactly put my finger on where I think the problem lay (I'm no technician) I just felt that the sound ...*didn't fill the space*.

The cueing was really good, and I didn't hear any *backstage on-mic chatting* which can happen with even the most experienced professional sound engineers!

The use of the echo on the Giant and Cinderella's mother's mic was really effective. On Cinderella's mother's mic it helped position the whole sequence as a lovely gentle emotional moment – *in fact unique in the show*.

I wasn't sure exactly where the orchestra was situated and if the orchestral sound was balanced by the sound desk? Of course, the orchestra were great and never drowned the singing – and provided brilliant underscoring and musical support – *but* – seemed a little too *unobtrusive* and *detached* from a sound point of view for me.

I know others may have a very different view – and so I understand that this is merely *my view* – and so not gospel!

Lighting

Overall, I thought the lighting was really appropriate to the setting and actually very good.

Lots of split gobos to create the dappled light in the woods and a lovely range of colour use - not just of the greens but the purple colour palette too.

The birds gobos worked really well - especially in the blinding of the sisters scene.

The *specials* to highlight the specific areas gave real focus to the baker's house and Jack's house and the general lighting for the fuller scenes was always good. There were a few times when actors – notably but not exclusively the Narrator - struggled to find their light – but that isn't really a lighting issue albeit often perceived as such by the general public!

Costume

The costuming of this production was spot on.

Given the programme lists *Costume Supervisors*, I am thinking the costumes, on the whole, were hired.

I think hiring costume is a great option if you can afford it – but hiring comes with a whole new set of problems!

You have to measure your cast reasonably accurately and then try to fit what they send you - on to your cast! Often hired costumes need alterations – which can only be temporary – and the amount of work can be underestimated.

To have just Beth and Stephy oversee the whole costume plot is remarkable – perhaps they should join whichever union Cinderella is a member of!

It isn't necessary to list the great costumes – as they were all great.

I did like how the Narrator was so differently presented – perfect.

My only moment of distraction – *costume wise* – was the seemingly *Marks & Spencer* white undergarment exposed by the Baker's wife after being ravaged in the undergrowth (*no euphemism intended!*) I would have preferred to have seen something less modern and more *wenchy* – if there is such a word? – or better still – nothing at all.

The Ball gowns were a real triumph and together with the princes' tunics added a real traditional fairytale feel.

I thought it was a shame that the *Witch transformation* hadn't happened *on stage* as I am sure it did in the original London production – I think I remember they might have used a body double so that Julia McKenzie was already *transformed* whilst voicing the witch from the wings in the previous dialogue. I am sure that you would have preferred this too - but maybe logistics simply made this impossible?

I am thinking some of our less theatrical audience might even have thought that two actors had been involved?

I felt it slightly lost the magic of the moment.

The *Wolf* costume representation was great including the hands and the well-defined costumes made all the characters so instantly recognisable.

What a lift the costumes will have made towards the end of your rehearsal period and how well everyone filled the costumes with their characterisations. You will no doubt have some brilliant dress rehearsal photos – please add a few to your programme for Oklahoma!

Hair & Make-up

Despite this being a Fairytale list of characters – the majority are *human* and so for most, no specific character make-up was needed – as most were also age appropriately cast.

There were however some important character make-up requirements all of which were achieved through prosthetics, make-up, and wigs and all of which looked absolutely right from my seat in the auditorium.

The *Wolf* looked suitably menacing and the *Witch* – with much of her face covered by either the prosthetic nose (looking great) or the hood of the cloak - really looked aged through her stance and the make-up combined.

Stance was another character aspect for *Granny* who also combined with the make-up gave us an *older characterisation* than the actor.

Musical Direction

I guess that every aspect of producing *Into the Woods* is challenging.

But perhaps the most challenging is the score.

And therefore, I think the key role in this production – much as I respect and admire the two directors – is the MD.

The music itself with – as Matt describes it – complex rhythms and harmonies – was presented in the most professional way with the *exceptional orchestra* – as Matt describes themand I completely agree.

I know that the orchestra is littered with professional musicians – many of whom are either music teachers or MDs themselves – and I know that many of the actors *are* great singers ...or are actors who *absolutely* know how to put over a song.

Perhaps with Sondheim the latter is the more important?

Even so, to bring all this together to produce such an amazing musical theatre experience for the audience is really quite an achievement.

I know the above comments may slightly seem at odds with my earlier comments about the sound overall – but I have really endeavoured to separate myself from lumping sound and musical direction together – even though of course they are sort of linked...ish.

If I was asked what the MD might have been able to do to improve the production I have only one answer:

Nothing.

Individual Performances

Narrator – Luke Whitchurch

I always feel I am in safe hands with this actor. A suave and confident portrayal not dissimilar to the narrator in *The Rocky Horror Show*. Great authoritative posture and well connected to the audience and being able to *hold* the audience with his physical presence and clear vocal tones.

It's Luke Whitchurch – what's not to like? – apart from the very modern (*and therefore out of step with the style of the show*) - “surprise” with the “” being emphasised with the fingers. Not that he was the only culprit!

Baker – Matt Thompson-Burrows

Of course, an adjudicator can express opinions – and preferences.

It's a competition, isn't it?

For me this was the most natural and complete performance of the evening.

Perfect casting (although to be fair I feel the whole show was pretty much perfectly cast).

The right physique (in my view). The most relaxed portrayal exuding warmth, strength, and vulnerability in bucketloads. I guess the role is pivotal and as such needs an actor that the audience can engage with and empathise with – which Matt allowed us to do.

A real *Sondheim* delivery of the songs with arguably a better singing voice than many professionals who have played this role before. By *Sondheim* delivery I mean being able to portray the meaning and feeling of the song as it was originally conceived.

Some actors just have that undefinable “something”.

Take another look at Matt’s biog photo in the programme – whatever that *something* is, is tangible in this photo.

Perhaps having Charlie to play opposite made this role even more effortless to play and thus really believable? The double-act (probably the wrong phrase) was more than the sum of the parts. Berkshire’s loss... Somerset’s gain.

Baker’s Wife – Charlie Wood

This is a great role played by an actor who really knows the importance of physical input to a role. Much of the pathos and sadness of the role came from the facial expressions and much of the comedic side of the role came from the complete embodiment of the character. I doubt there was anything in the writing that you weren’t able to put on the stage. You really worked well with Matt, and you certainly made the most of your “Moment” in the woods with Cinderella’s Prince. You’ll realise why I put moment in “”?

Witch – Sarah Westaway

Sarah describes the witch as the *best part* to play. It certainly is challenging both vocally and physically and ideally suits someone who can *wow* us with the transformation. Sarah was certainly able to do this by not only turning from the ravaged-faced hag to a most beautiful young woman but also in the complete stature change from doubled-over to tall, slender, and graceful.

The costuming of both personas was absolutely spot on, and I guess helps with the transformation, but it is the complete change in character that impressed. Vocally strong and amazingly consistent in retaining the earlier characterisation throughout. Another box ticked?

Jack’s Mother – Jennifer Holland-Brewer

A very strong performance of a woman who seems to have a lot to contend with. Having seen Imelda Staunton play the Baker’s Wife in the original production of *Into the Woods*, I thought she was making a comeback in another role!

I hope it's not offensive to liken you to Miss Staunton who is a seasoned musical theatre actor who typifies the *strong woman* role. You really did exude strength throughout and proved that you can tackle anything thrown at you. With your acting and singing experience shining through, your knock-out sequence was simply ...well...knock out!
Possibly my favourite single moment in the show!
Does that make me shallow!?

Jack – Matt Parker

When I was looking through the programme before the show started, I thought ...hello... he looks a bit old. Often Jack is played by a younger and slighter actor and of course, is written as naïve.

However, from the get-go I really enjoyed your portrayal.

I sort of felt your Jack had a simplicity that went ever so slightly beyond naïve which increased his vulnerability and therefore his likeability.

Because you are tall it seemed to add a further layer of vulnerability which only made me connect with you more... and made me realise that pre-conceived ideas about fictional characters – are never a good idea!

I really enjoyed your vocal contributions throughout and your *I guess this is Goodbye* was really endearing and your *Giants in the Sky* full of wonderment and sincerity. All your singing was very much *in character* – which I really liked. With your background and training it is no wonder that you are the asset to YAOS that you have become.

I think I remember you sharing a tower with Sir Lancelot in Crewkerne ...and now you've been up Rapunzel's tower with the Baker ...let's hope no-one offers to take you up the Shard.

Little Red Riding Hood – Izzy Macgregor

Another perfectly appropriate casting of a more than capable actor in a key role. LRRH has so many lovely moments in the show, and you showed yourself able to rise to all the challenges including singing Sondheim with a mouth full of food! It was my favourite moment in the show until Jack's mother got knocked out by the Steward! Your amazing wide-eyed innocence shone through and your sincere girliness made your whole performance charged with energy which made for an infectious portrayal. I am sure I wasn't alone in being compelled to watch you all the time. Your great singing voice and a strong determined characterisation helped the *Your Fault* number become not only a masterclass in vocal teamwork (*from the four of you*) - but a highlight within the scoreand the show.

I'm imagining you will be very pleased with how this all turned out for you. I would be.

Granny – Emily Wilson

Whilst very much a cameo role within the ensemble you made a great impact on your entrance from the Wolf or should that be you exit from the Wolf?! You certainly portrayed a lively Granny and gave the scene energy whilst joining in several of the ensemble sequences. What a lovely role – with not too much pressure – to add to your great catalogue of past performances – especially as this is such a favourite show of yours.

Wolf – Jay Westaway

Maybe you saw Damien Lewis on TV in the *Good Friends* Sondheim tribute show performing your number – which he did brilliantly.

As did you.

There are so many musical phrases within the song that are really not easy and to make them sound good you really need to be on it.

I thought you looked great, held yourself well in that slightly stalking and sinister way and performed a very difficult song with apparent ease.

Your contribution to some of the other ensemble sequences was really valued and your costuming allowed you to step in and out of the Wolf role.

It's another of those cameo roles that allows you some brilliantly memorable moments in the show without the huge pressure of a full rehearsal schedule – best leave those schedules to the wife, eh?

Cinderella – Leah Driver

Your biog suggests your forte is dance. Whilst this may be true – in my mind your other great asset is your ability to act through song so that the audience can read you.

If you have ever seen Mark Rylance in *Wolf Hall* (the TV version) I swear you can tell what he is thinking even when he doesn't speak. I felt in so many of your spoken and sung sequences your face was very clearly telling the story of the lyrics – so if you had been singing in a foreign language, I am sure I would have got the gist of the song. The angst, the sadness, the hopefulness, and the desire were all there in your face as you went on a bit of a roller-coaster of a ride with this role.

You performed Cinderella with such apparent ease – it was compelling.

Florinda & Lucinda – Charmayne Hooper & Lucy Speke

I hope you don't mind me speaking about you as a pair. You worked really well together and gave the audience some great comic moments as well as reminding us of the rather gruesome side to Cinderella's story.

Your very youthful demeanour gave energy to your scenes, and you played off of one another really well. Your *family* sequences enabled you to portray the appropriate level of superiority and aloofness that your onstage mother believed you deserved.

Cinderella's Stepmother – Maureen Wycherley

Yet another example of an extremely experienced leading lady in a significant role that in some productions may well be played by someone with less gravitas. I guess any role is what you make it, and Maureen is no stranger to putting her own slant on a character. Cinderella's stepmother has some lovely soprano musical moments, and these were enough to remind the audience that all the performers in this production are of the highest calibre and Maureen is up there with the best. A real sense of authority within the family group and wearing (possibly) the best costumes in the show – Maureen was very much at home!

I think perhaps "*Cinderella's Stepmother*" doesn't *sound* much of a part. But it is performances like this that really remind us that *every* role in a Sondheim show ...is worth giving your all to.

Cinderella's Mother – Naomi Lawton

I know I keep saying it – but how many more leading ladies does YAOS have!?! This, the only *spirit* character, needs to have an ethereal and calming presence and with the help of the echo mic and your gentle and reassuring demeanour you were spot on. Just lovely.

Cinderella's Father – Michael Francis

A hen-pecked husband who has rather bitten off more than he can chew. No wonder you looked a bit downtrodden and weary.

Whilst perhaps the smallest of the cameo roles it is none the less important within the story of poor Cinderella. It makes her solitude perhaps even more palpable because he isn't strong enough to help her.

So, he needs to be weak as his weakness emphasises Cinderella's plight even more. Job done I'd say.

Cinderella's Prince – Seb Watts
Rapunzel's Prince – Harrison Waterhouse

What great roles the two princes are.

Like being one of the strippers in *Gypsy*.

You come on – sing a song, steal the show, take the applause... and bugger off.

These two actors were so well cast – the older being the heir apparent and the younger feeling a little dismissed.

The older opting for a romp in the woods whilst the younger is prepared to climb a tower to sniff the flowers.

Cinderella's Prince has the extra few years that really gives him the cocky, confidence that comes with royal privilege whereas Rapunzel's Prince is much more the puppy-dog enthusiast – rather naïve and exceptionally keen!

Both actors were perfect in these roles – matching each other vocally – looking resplendent side by side and sharing their absurdities with us to great comic effect. I would suggest both actors go to Camden market where you can buy these types of tunic easily. Because in them – you will never look better!

Rapunzel – Hannah Long

What a delightful role Rapunzel must have been to play – if you can meet the vocal challenges...and no worries on that score.

For much of the time no worries about movement either – being stuck in the tower and pursued by possibly the most handsome boy in all of Fairyland!

You really looked lovely and innocent and naïve and everything that we want from Rapunzel - given her horrendous abduction and imprisonment since birth!

These stories really aren't very nice are they – I'm beginning to understand why perhaps there are those trying to get them re-written!

Anyway – Hannah – really well done with *Our Little World* vocals and your switch to the much stronger Rapunzel characterisation once you realise that life has much more to offer outside of the small world imposed on you by the witch.

Mysterious Man – Duncan Wright

Mysterious indeed – with a slight touch of madness – or so he appears.

He is an eccentric with a very sad backstory and was presented exactly as such in this production. Very clear diction so that we could hear every word – important because so much of his dialogue has a double meaning and retrospective significance.

The song is challenging with a difficult rhythm and lyrically it is a bit of a conundrum as well. I really liked this very wide-eyed portrayal and was pleased

to see someone of the right age to be the Baker's father playing the role.

Which I guess made Duncan the obvious and perfect choice.

Steward – Nick Toop

I wonder if when you were cast in the role you realised how important and significant the role would end up being in the show?

I realise you are an eminent performer with training and experience over many years and that on the face of it the Steward might not have been your biggest challenge to date.

But boy did you make the most of it. There were a number of company vocal sequences and ensemble scenes in which you had to sing, deliver dialogue, complete actions, attack a poor defenceless woman alongside other comedic moments... and grasp the great opportunities that you were given to strut your funky stuff.

I felt that you were a bit of a hidden gem within the ensemble ...but shone over the footlights to great effect.

If this had been *Carry On Into the Woods* ...your role would have been played by *Charles Hawtrey* ...and he would have stolen a few scenes as well.

Priceless.

Milky White – Lucy Capes

What a lovely interpretation of the character of Milky White.

Your stillness ensured the audience weren't distracted from the cow and this is quite difficult to master.

So many times, I found myself watching the cow who was watching and listening to the action. Gentle, small movements of the head were specific and well timed, and the later slow collapse was all rather moving.

My only thought about what I might have tried to suggest in rehearsal would have been about when Milky White changed location – walking across or coming on or going off stage.

You (inevitably?) lifted the cow up and you walked with the other actors – at their pace. I think that a cow is so slow you might have not immediately walked with the other actors... but very slowly *followed* them after?

This would have enabled you to keep the cow's hooves nearer the floor and might have looked more representative of the cow moving slowly ...or should I say ... moooving slowly!

This is really a directorial note I suppose.

And just a thought I had...that may have already been tried and not worked?

But you were really great. Very well done.

I met your mum in the foyer before the show – she was dead excited... and I bet she is very proud of you.

Giant/Swing/Sleeping Beauty – Jodie Glover
Swing/Snow White – Amelia Meldrum

What a luxury to have two swings – who can also contribute to the ensemble on stage. The voice of the giant was really clear and suitably threatening. I wasn't sure if this was being delivered live using an off stage mic or pre-recorded? It doesn't matter either way – it was very effective, and the echo gave us a real surround-sound. My understanding of a swing is that they learn some of the other roles – as understudies – or maybe they stand in during rehearsals to help the other actors and the director keep things going during absences. However, this worked in this production, your efforts would have been so valued by everyone that you helped or covered. Added to that you were on stage during some of the larger ensemble numbers giving us a fuller stage – every little helps.

A big thank you to YAOS for enabling me to enjoy and share in your production of *Into the Woods*.
Long may the YAOS company/ensemble be filled with such talented players who realise that there is no such thing as a small role.
And ...perhaps we should all remember *Be careful what you wish for.*

Andy Marchant
Adjudicator – David Beach Awards