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Society : Panda Players
Production : The Addams Family
Date : 10 March 2023
Venue : The Elgiva, Chesham
Report by : Judith Watsham

[Show Report](#)

Thank you for inviting me to report on your 2023 production and also thank you, Julia, for your hospitality.

The Addams Family has great potential for a talented director and brilliant wardrobe team due to the fact that they can let their imaginations run riot when it comes to the ensemble who make up the Ancestors. I have seen several different productions of this musical and each one has been totally different due, of course, to the abilities of the production team as well as the members of the ensemble in creating a wide range of very different characters. Your show was no exception and all the hard work from Amber Dye, your Director and Choreographer, as well as your clever costume team of Janice Suter, Trish Lewis, Marion Raeburn-James and David Mundy really paid off in spades.

Just a mention of the choreography Amber. I thought that this was just right, very well thought out and suited to the abilities of the cast. You are very fortunate in having several members who can dance and move well, including your two dance captains, Sophie Dell and Carys Vaughan-Smith. Overall, too, your direction was sure and you encouraged the entire cast to turn in some superb performances.

The large troupe of Ancestors, too, had worked extremely hard, each one of you focusing well on your reactions to the events around you – and always completely in the character indicated by your outfits.

MD Graham Thomson had obviously worked hard with you all and his unseen band were very good indeed.

I thought the use of the auditorium from time to time worked very well – whether it was Ancestors spying on Wednesday and Lucas or Grandma sweeping around the venue cackling with glee at the audience before curtain up.

Roger Knight's sound was always well balanced and he and R-J Sarmé, managed all the SFX well.

I particularly liked Jezz Vaughan's lighting design and he and Isaac Roitt achieved some excellent effects. The use of the red lights was particularly striking in one scene.

Make up was appropriate to all the characters too – this was another team who achieved some really effective results.

As you know, 'props' was my contribution to the amateur stage for many years and so I am always interested in this department. All I can say is I am glad I did not have to work in this area for this show and completely understand why you needed both a team to organize and a separate team to manage the props during the production. Loved the moving hand! Well done to you all. A great monster under the bed too!

SM David J Martin and his crew managed the few changes efficiently and ensured that the show ran smoothly.

A nice programme from *martiarts design* with some good photographs. As the Pandas have their own wardrobe, I was surprised that none of the photos featured costumes for this production though. Do enter it for the Programme Awards for 2023 – results announced in 2024. The list of scenes in the programme was helpful as essentially you had one set with the addition of a few props to delineate different rooms in the Addams mansion.

The set was very effective, especially the fireman's pole – not seen that before and it worked really well as did the 'trees' in Central Park. Use of steel deck to achieve two levels always works well in *The Elgiva* and, of course, gives far more scope to all the movement required. There were some notable moments which used the levels, one in the Playroom when the Ancestors all pulled on the ropes to torture Pugsley – the others mainly concerned Lurch doing his unobtrusive lurking and watching!

Now, to the cast:

I have already mentioned the contribution made by the ensemble – you all added so much to the overall success of this production – congratulations everyone.

Matt Winter portrayed Gomez and was totally believable in the role. Matt you sang and acted very well and maintained your strong accent throughout. You inhabited the role well and always looked just right, well done on the patent leather shoes, a nice touch. A very different role to the last one I saw too (Kipps); your dancing was excellent and you created some very effective 'pictures' alongside Morticia.

So we come to Morticia, a lovely performance here from Marion Raeburn-James. I know you were also part of both the wardrobe and props-sourcing teams – so very busy. You too sang, danced and acted extremely well always keeping your accent just right – never overdoing it. Your rendition of *Just Around the Corner* was a highspot. Very well played Marion.

Daughter Wednesday was portrayed by Anya Vaughan-Smith. You really captured the character of a teenager, although from your programme notes I would imagine that you are probably just out of your teens! Your stance and mannerisms were all well observed and just right. A very good singing voice too.

Beau Dunsford played Pugsley well and your rendition of *What If* was well sung and acted with some well thought out facial expressions.

Uncle Fester, Barry Dell. Yet another superb portrayal. Very good moves and expressions and the pathos in your announcement that you were in love with the moon was pitched just right. This is essential a comedy moment, of course, and you never succumbed to the temptation to overdo it.

Grandma, Cassie Winter. As I have already mentioned I loved your sweep around the audience before the show started and your characterisation was just right with some great facial expressions.

The final member of the Addams household is Lurch and David Mundy played the part to perfection. Loved your reaction and moves when Wednesday 'got you' with her crossbow! A very well sung solo at the end too David. I also noted that you got your moves just right, always in character, silent and unobtrusive, watching, never upstaging the rest of the cast - notably in Morticia's number, *Just Around the Corner*.

The outsiders, the Beineke family all provided a fairly sane contrast to the Addams Family.

Mal, Des Fahy, morphed fairly seamlessly from a pompous businessman into a happier, more relaxed character. *Crazier Than You* was very well performed from start to finish. Excellent accent both in speech and song.

Alice, Angela Milton, also had to transform from a ditzy character into an affectionate wife and mother. Your high spot was, of course, your part in *Full Disclosure* which you performed extremely well. Difficult to sing as well as you did when throwing yourself around too, I was full of admiration!

Noah Smith played son Lucas as the all American college boy – just as we see in so many films and TV shows from the US. Totally in character with a very well-maintained accent throughout.

Thank you again for providing your audience with a most entertaining evening. Well done Pandas!

Judith Watsham

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