

Twanky keeps it bubbly

Sanderstead Dramatic Club Aladdin

.....
Diana Eccleston

YOU can always rely on this company to deliver a thoroughly enjoyable, "old-fashioned" in the best sense of the words, and colourful panto.

Under the direction of David Apps they underscore the traditional elements of pantomime, most notably with their "veteran" Dame John Shepherd, who here adds laundress Widow Twanky to his long list of credits.

She's a smashing old girl and the outfit for her first entrance - a frock embellished with bits of washing pegged to the hem and a whirling rotary line on her hat - sets the standard for an imaginative wardrobe for the rest of the show.

Shepherd is an experienced trouper, never at a loss for words if things go slightly awry, and who knows exactly how to milk the script for every last drop of comedy. He never settles for audience

participation at less than full throttle and gets everyone in an excited frenzy of "behind-yous" and "Oh no you didn'ts."

He also leads a hilarious version of the old *If I Were not Upon the Stage* number with its mechanical actions ending up with the Emperor getting an ice cream in the face.

The show has a glamorous and smiling principal boy (Katherine Thompson) and a Princess (Helen Chandler) who, as a stropky teenager, is much more the type a modern audience will relate to than a fey Chinese royal.

Tim Crump is eminently hiss-worthy as the cape-twirling villain Abanazar, but he's on a hiding to nothing as a couple of oddball goodies are out to foil him.

They are Dot Reid's hard-of-hearing Slave of the Ring, who pops up with the jar of honey instead of a bag of money, and John Tait's Genie of the Lamp who turns out to be her long-lost husband.

James Caldwell and Catherine Yardley are Wishee and Washee, Aladdin's brother and sister

whose desire to be pop idols gives the show one of its up-to-date references. They finally get to sing their big number - *The Time Warp* - aided by the teams of senior and junior dances provided and choreographed by Penny Parks.

They get plenty to do and I especially enjoyed the novelty appearance by the little ones as soap bubbles coming out of Twanky's defective washing machine and as mini Mrs Mopp cleaners in the palace being given some whistling drill by Twanky.

Costumes (by Catherine Yardley and Kathy Tilney) are a riot of colour with an eye-catching walk-down and I very much liked the Chinese sets (designed by Di Ralston and Richard Clarke-Irons).

There's live music too, from Chris Greenhalgh, Sarah Hume and Ross Clark.

Well worth a visit - if you can get a ticket.

■ also tonight (Friday) at 8pm and Saturday at 2pm and 6pm at Sanderstead Church Hall, Onslow Gardens.

Box office: 020 8657 5867.