

The Sleeping Beauty

**All Saint's Church Hall,
Sanderstead**

rating ★★★★★

CELEBRATING their centenary year, Sanderstead Dramatic Club once again found the perfect mix for their traditional community panto. It had a strong script by director David Apps, with some fun, original touches such as references to and characters from other pantomimes.

There were some clever special effects and it looked colourful, with beautifully-designed village sets populated by a company boosted by some lovely dancers, who are pupils of choreographer Penny Parks.

They looked a picture as pretty fairies.

The show's real strength was its feel for comedy, led by John Shepherd playing his 15th dame, Nanny Nelly. He's a total natural, with an ad-lib for every occasion, and knows how to rev up audience participation if ever it flags – which is rarely.

He was out there with the daft duo Hans Hoff (James Caldwell) and Nees Benz (Adam Damerell) with the song sheet and was first in line for the tried and tested 'If I were not in this panto' slapstick song sequence. This was a fine-tuned piece of comedy with most of the team ending up smothered in gunge and it gave me one of the biggest laughs of any pantomime this season.

There were some novel songs, familiar melodies blessed with original lyrics, and accompaniment from Chris Greenhalgh's small band was first class.

Diana Eccleston