

Review of [Treasure Island](#)

*"thoroughly enjoyable evening of entertainment"*

by Cheryl Rowlands for remotegoat on 02/06/14



Tonight was the opening night for this run of al fresco performances, and my daughter, Melissa and I were really looking forward to it. Set in the beautiful grounds of Tyntesfield in Wraxall, we duly arrived with our picnic, blankets and chairs. The relatively small audience was a mix of families with children and retired people, with some of the children having arrived in pirate costumes which was very endearing.

It was a small cast of eight with each cast member playing several different parts. It was a simple set that changed from ship to inn etc and back again as the performance progressed, with the addition of a gorgeous ship's bell, wheel and ladder, and boxes for the inns. The set changes were explained to the audience in a lovely little speech by Director James Reynard (Long John Silver/Adult Jim Hawkins), whilst the cast made the first of many costume changes behind the set. I loved these subtle costume changes which, from what I could tell from looking round, were not noticed by the audience. I saw them because I was looking for them and they were executed very well. So too were the scene changes. The sound of loud gunfire coming from behind us certainly got the audience's attention - especially the children! There was a particularly endearing moment when a young child in the audience joined in loudly with the cast's toast to "Luck and Courage"!!!

The costumes were lovely and my 16-year-old daughter remarked to me that she was pleased they had kept to the original story and not tried to "Disney it up" as she put it.

I loved Tyler Coombes' (Billy Bones) characterisations, and his enthusiastic singing of "Yo Ho!". He was my daughter's favourite character throughout. The little quips and local references to Bristol were much appreciated by the audience and it was lovely to hear them giggling and tittering at the jokes. Young Jim Hawkins was played to great effect by Claire Tucker, and I was impressed generally with the casts' switching of roles. Micheal Skellern played "Black Dog" and the voice of Parrot the Pirate to great effect. The parrot was a great touch and loved by the children in the audience, who flocked to have their photos taken with it at the end.

The Robert Newton-esque "yarr-arr" scene with the Bearded Pirates, Anthony Young and Jayne Lloyd (Producer), was very funny drawing much laughter from the audience, and the use of coconuts for horses hooves was, I felt, ingenious. In a world where sounds effects are regularly produced on computers nowadays, it was lovely to hear some traditional sound effects, as with the ship's bell which was rung to indicate the end of each scene. Pippa Meekings made a brilliant pirate and was my favourite. I absolutely adored her characterisation throughout the entire performance and her death scene was very gruesome and quite vocal, and it was with great relief to the audience when she jumped up and said: "I'm not dead!" and then went on to announce the interval. I also loved Blind Pew and Ben Gunn played by Rob Keeves. His Ben Gunn was very comical.

The fight sequences, choreographed by Tom Jordan, using the very real swords were brilliant and very well executed by the actors in what was quite a confined performance area, and there were lovely souvenir Programmes with a map of Treasure Island and a brief synopsis and Director's Note by James Reynard.

I admit to becoming slightly lost in the second part as did my daughter, but on the whole we both thoroughly enjoyed this production and I would highly recommend it. Take your champagne picnic and your chairs and blankets and you are in for a treat. A wonderful performance, great cast and as the evening draws in, the gorgeous smell of the evening air and grass combined with floodlighting of the stage and the wonderful action on it made for a quite magical experience.

I wish them every good wish with the rest of the run.