



Show Report

Showstoppers Theatre Group

The Grinch - The Panto

19 December 2025

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

PRODUCTION	The Grinch - The Panto
SOCIETY	Showstoppers Theatre Group
VENUE	Hyde Festival Theatre
GENRE	Pantomime
CAST SIZE	55
DIRECTORS	Rachel Bunting & Victoria Husband
ENSEMBLE CHOREOGRAPHERS	Victoria Husband, Rachel Bunting, Megan Husband & Katie Wilkins
FEATURED DANCERS CHOREOGRAPHERS	Megan Husband & Katie Wilkins
ENSEMBLE ASSISTANT	Tom Dodd
COSTUMES	Victoria Husband
MARKETING	Megan Husband
VOCAL DIRECTOR	Katie Wilkins
STAGE MANAGER	Rachel Bunting
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER	Victoria Husband
STAGE CREW	Victoria Husband & Dave Husband
SET DESIGN & PROPS	Rachel Bunting & Victoria Husband
ASSISTED BY	Megan Husband, Katie Wilkins, Bella Bunting, Chloe Croke & Lily-Mai Waite
LIGHTING DESIGN	Steven Oliver-Grant
LIGHTING OPERATOR	Noah Pattison
SOUND	Daniel Oliver-Grant & Kelly Holder
TICKET PROVIDER	Sparks Theatre Management
PROGRAMME DESIGN	Rachel Bunting
VIDEOGRAPHER	JHC Video Services - Phil Steels
LEAD CHAPERONE	Megan Husband
CHAPERONES	Katie Wilkins, Katie Dearnaley, Becci Alberti-King, Sally Morgan, Sheila Gooding, Ann Croke, Carley Baddeley, Tracey Hall, Elizabeth Adamson, Michelle Wright, Tina Swinyard, Emily Hill, Tanya Shaw, Lucy Green, Romona Travis
FRONT OF HOUSE	Hyde Festival Theatre Volunteers

CAST LIST

Grinch	Michael Brickell
Pinchit	Evie Etches
Nora	Erin Kay
Mayor	Leo Husband
Annie Good	Zoe Swinyard
Charlie Chuckle	Libby Hall
Santa	Albie Nightingale
Widget	Benjamin Cruden
Polly	Elodie Carter
Spirit of Christmas	Poppy Adamson
Grimble	Max France
Snow Queen	Anna Davies

SENIOR ENSEMBLE

Echo 1	Evelyn Beresford
Echo 2	Sophie Wilson
Echo 3	Lottie Simpson
Elf 1	Stephen Hoey
Elf 2	Jorgie-Leigh Dodd
Elf 3	Sophia Wright
Elf 4	Nyla Robinson
Elf 5	Samantha Newberry
Elf 6	Ava Bramford
Little Grinch	Archie Dinsdale
Chuckleleer	Amelia Crossley
Chuckleleer	Freya Collins
Who	Tabitha Arrowsmith
Penguin	Summer Croke
Who	Camilla Batchell
Pizza Courier	Matthew Millers

JUNIOR ENSEMBLE

Child 1	Florence Nugent
Child 2	Prince Haddow
Child 3	Betsy Allen
Child 4	Aria Mellows

Child 5	Albert Beresford
Child 6	Daisy Gaskell
Who	Avani Fredrick
Who	Louisa Johnstone
Who	Anna Timoney
Who	Grace Wathey
Who	Lily Lester
Rudolph	Ella-Rose Crossley
Patch	Eliza Drabble
Who	Ruby Watkins
Who	Aubrey Smith

DANCERS

	Amelia Hughes
	Bella Bunting
	Chloe Ann Croke
	Emelia Green
	Evelyn Dentith
	Elisha Harrison
	Lexi-Marie Shaw
	Lily-Mai Waite
	Lily-May Baguley
	Sophia Moussa
	Tom Dodd
	Zosia Kedzierska

DATE OF PERFORMANCE	Friday 19th December 2025
DATE REPORT PUBLISHED	Sunday 21st December 2025
ADJUDICATOR ID	NSA0003
NSA LOGO ON POSTER	Yes
NSA IN PROGRAMME	Yes
PROGRAMME CLASS	Best Licensed

THE REVIEW

REVIEW WORD COUNT

1823

STRONGEST ELEMENTS

Standout Performances

Two performances that truly stood out were **Max France** as the energetic and endlessly engaging Grimple, and **Erin Kay** as the bold and charismatic Nora. Both performers commanded the stage whenever they appeared, bringing infectious energy, strong character choices, and a confident connection with the audience that made their scenes memorable highlights of the show.

There Are No Small Parts

Performers with smaller roles truly made their mark. **Archie Dinsdale** and **Elodie Carter** were perfect examples of this, both making a strong impression in their brief appearances, alongside others who maximised every moment on stage. From heartfelt performances to perfectly timed comic moments, these cast members proved that even a single line or short scene can shine when delivered with confidence and commitment.

A Labour of Love

From the cast on stage to the crew working tirelessly behind the scenes, it was clear that this production was fuelled by passion and dedication. The enjoyment, commitment, and countless hours of hard work shone through in their performance, making *The Grinch, The Panto* a heartfelt celebration of theatre and teamwork.

From the moment my guest and I arrived, it was clear that Showstoppers Theatre Group's *The Grinch, The Panto* was rooted firmly in community spirit. We were given a warm and friendly welcome by both the theatre volunteers and our hosts from the society, with parents cheerfully selling programmes and raffle tickets and instantly setting a festive tone. As the auditorium filled, there was unmistakable Christmas cheer in the air, with friends and family of the cast joined by local Scouts and Beavers enjoying a seasonal outing. It was heart-warming to see such strong community support – a perfect reminder that it is always wonderful when the community comes together to support the community.

The story transported us to Whoville, where the cheerful Whos are busy preparing for their biggest and most joyful Christmas yet, delighting in festive cheer and celebration. High above the town, however, lives the Grinch, who despises the noise, joy, and endless merriment of the season. Determined to put an end to Christmas once and for all, he hatches a mischievous plan

to steal it. This version, however, was far from the familiar film or book many know. Instead, Showstoppers presented a festive stage adaptation with a pantomime-inspired twist, offering playful surprises and humour that gave the classic tale a fresh spin.

The opening number burst onto the stage in a sea of colour and Christmas décor, from decorated flats to tinsel-adorned hair. With an impressive cast of 55 performers, it was wonderful to see so many young people giving their all from the very start. What stood out most was the wide age range of the cast, from just 6 to 18 years old, all working seamlessly together. Their shared energy and enjoyment were immediately evident, setting a joyful tone for the rest of the show.

Michael Brickell delivered a strong and confident performance as the Grinch, the grumpy, mischievous outsider determined to steal the festive joy of Whoville. With a role heavy in dialogue, it was clear that Michael knew his lines thoroughly, maintaining a strong pace and driving the story forward effectively. I particularly enjoyed the subtle nods to the Grinch we know and love from the film, with thoughtful attention given to his lugubrious demeanour, mannerisms, and movement. That said, I would have liked to see these choices pushed further – the Grinch is an inherently overdramatic character, especially when plotting to ruin Christmas, and more exaggerated physicality could have heightened both the comedy and the emotional arc of his transformation. While we did see glimpses of this journey, bolder physical choices would have elevated it further. Michael also handled audience interjections with confidence, as expected of a panto lead, and deserves real credit for performing in a full, head-to-toe hairy green suit and prosthetic face – no small feat under warm stage lights in a packed theatre.

Evie Etches delivered an upbeat and engaging performance as Pinchit, the magically created bad side of Charlie Chuckle and the Grinch's loyal – if slightly overworked – sidekick. While there were moments early on where excitement led to lines being delivered at a quicker pace, particularly during her duet with Michael, Evie grew in confidence as the show progressed and settled comfortably into the role. It was clear she had a strong grasp of her lines and stage direction, and her performance continued to build in strength throughout. I would have enjoyed seeing her explore Pinchit's mischievous side even further and lean more fully into the character's "bad" streak, but this is something that will naturally develop with experience. Overall, Evie showed great potential, and her growing confidence and commitment made her a pleasure to watch.

Erin Kay brought a fresh and confident take to the role of Nora, the Dame, and any initial surprise at seeing the role played by a female performer quickly disappeared. From her first entrance, Erin commanded the audience's attention, her distinctive southern drawl perfectly suiting the character. Her introduction, set to *HOTTOGO* by Chappell Roan, was a fantastic song choice and led seamlessly into a classic Dame monologue packed with jokes and cheeky innuendo. Erin was fully engaged throughout, constantly reacting to the action around her and building a strong rapport with the audience. She handled audience shouts and responses confidently and warmly; with just a little more patience to allow the laughs to land, this was a lively and engaging performance that captured the spirit of a pantomime Dame.

Leo Husband gave an entertaining and assured performance as the Mayor of Whoville, a man firmly in charge and frequently subjected to Nora’s flirtatious advances – much to his dismay. He carried the role with the authority you would expect, responding to Nora’s chat-up lines with well-judged comic timing that kept the dialogue flowing. A brief moment of being tongue-tied momentarily revealed a slip to the audience, but learning to pause and reset will help keep such moments seamless in future. Overall, Leo contributed well to the humour and rhythm of the scenes he appeared in.

Zoe Swinyard delivered a confident and polished performance as Annie Good, the Whoville resident who believes a little kindness can go a long way. While I would have liked to see more reactive acting during ensemble scenes, Zoe truly shone when she sang. Her strong, textured voice filled the theatre and evoked the charm and warmth of classic Hollywood Christmas films, leaving a lasting impression.

Libby Hall clearly enjoyed her role as Charlie Chuckle, the story’s Silly Billy and head of the Chuckleleers. She showed strong knowledge of the script, good reaction skills, and built a genuine connection with the audience, even throwing in the occasional ad-lib. I would have liked to see a more exaggerated, over-the-top entrance, as the Silly Billy traditionally acts as a bold bridge between the stage and the audience, but Libby’s performance was engaging and playful throughout.

Albie Nightingale and **Benjamin Cruden** worked very well together as Santa and Head Elf Widget. Their scenes were clearly well rehearsed, with smooth pacing and confident delivery. Albie’s choice to use a deep, authoritative voice for Santa worked particularly well, while Benjamin’s varied vocal delivery as Widget added a pleasing melodic quality. Together, they formed a warm and effective pairing.

Poppy Adamson gave a strong and confident performance as the Spirit of Christmas, acting as the narrator who guided us from opening to finale. Poised and graceful, she embodied the fairy-like nature of the role, with a lovely rise and fall in her voice keeping the dialogue engaging. While more physical movement – particularly of the arms – could have enhanced the illusion of casting spells or weaving magic, her solo rendition of *Once Upon a December* was beautiful and perfectly suited to the character.

Our journey also took us to the Ice Palace of the Snow Queen, played by **Anna Davies**, where we met Grimble the Imp, portrayed by **Max France**. Anna’s clear diction and regal delivery suited the role well, and her solo was a welcome addition, though her key moment would have benefited from stronger visual staging. Max, however, was a standout. Bursting onto the stage rapping *Ice Ice Baby*, his energy never dipped. With clear diction, varied tone, and full commitment even when not speaking, he consistently drew the eye and was a joy to watch.

A touching flashback introduced the Little Grinch, played by **Archie Dinsdale**, who delivered his lines confidently and sang *Where Are You Christmas* with genuine emotion. Accompanied by Patch the dog, played by **Eliza Drabble**, who clearly enjoyed her role despite only contributing the occasional well-timed woof, this moment was heartfelt and memorable.

Elodie Carter also made her mark as Polly, a Whoville resident who mistakes the Grinch for Santa. With clear diction and excellent comic timing – particularly during the Who/What name joke – she demonstrated once again that even a small role can have a big impact.

The dancers were a lovely addition to the musical numbers, with choreography by **Megan Husband** and **Katie Wilkins** enhancing the overall performances. The routines included some beautifully executed lyrical sections and a number of brave lifts, which added visual interest and energy to the show. The sleek, in-sync cheer routine in Act 1 was a particular standout, while the bat scene that opened Act 2 created a striking and atmospheric start to the second half of the show.

The ensemble was split into junior and senior groups, with the juniors taking on the roles of Whos and Icy Imps, and it was clear from their collective performance just how much fun they were having. A sea of smiling faces filled the stage, their enthusiasm for singing and dancing infectious and a joy for the audience to watch. With many of the junior ensemble new to Showstoppers, it will be wonderful to see how these young performers grow and develop in the coming years.

The senior ensemble took on a variety of roles including Chuckleleers, Elves, Whos, Echoes, and Penguins, and, like their junior counterparts, clearly relished their time on stage. They delivered their lines with confidence and enhanced each scene through strong background acting, helping to create well-rounded and engaging moments throughout the show. A special mention must go to the Echoes, played by **Evelyn Beresford**, **Sophie Wilson**, and **Lottie Simpson**, whose whispered dialogue and delivery convincingly created a haunting echo effect that I particularly enjoyed.

Behind the scenes, directors **Rachel Bunting** and **Victoria Husband**, supported by **Sparks Theatre Management**, clearly invested countless hours alongside a very small team to bring the show together. Vocal direction by Katie Wilkins showcased bold song choices from artists such as Queen, The Beatles, and Meat Loaf, with *Help* standing out for its harmonies. Costumes, overseen by Victoria Husband, were effective and clear, with the UV costumes at the start of Act 2 providing a stunning visual moment.

Lighting design by **Steve Oliver-Grant** was thoughtful and atmospheric, with warm tones in Santa's Workshop contrasting beautifully with the icy blues of the Ice Palace. Special mention must go to **Noah Pattison**, who volunteered to operate the lighting and did an impressive job hitting cues and executing smooth transitions for his first production. Sound, operated by **Daniel Oliver-Grant** and **Kelly Holder**, was well handled despite the challenge of a large mic'd cast, with sound effects – particularly for the Echoes – adding depth to the performance.

Overall, my guest and I had a thoroughly enjoyable evening and certainly felt our hearts grow with Christmas cheer. While this did not fully meet my expectations of a traditional pantomime – lacking some of the archetypes and audience interaction until later in Act 2 – it was nonetheless a lovely Christmas show bursting with festive spirit. What truly shone throughout

was how much the cast clearly loved being part of it, and ultimately that is what matters most. A huge congratulations to the entire cast and crew, thank you for the warm welcome, and we very much look forward to seeing what Showstoppers Theatre Group do next.

PHOTOGRAPHS









PROGRAMME

HYDE Festival THEATRE

Show Stoppers THEATRE GROUP

act

THE GRINCH

The Panto

Hyde Festival Theatre
18th - 20th December 2025
7.15p.m / additional 2p.m Saturday matinee

Souvenir Programme

Tickets Available from:
www.sparksem.com
£9 Concessions / £12 Adults

Sparks

www.limelightscripts.co.uk
Script by Limelight Scripts

Northern Stage Awards