



Show Report

Tameside Youth Drama Group

Cinderella

22 January 2026

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

PRODUCTION	Cinderella
SOCIETY	Tameside Youth Drama Group
VENUE	Hyde Festival Theatre
GENRE	Pantomime
CAST SIZE	44
DIRECTOR	Rachel Bunting
ENSEMBLE CHOREOGRAPHER	Katie Dearnaley
DANCER CHOREOGRAPHERS	Becci Alberti-King & Victoria Husband
COSTUMES	Carole Levy
ASSISTED BY	Becci Alberti-King
TREASURER	Janet Butterworth
STAGE MANAGER	Rachel Bunting
STAGE CREW	Victoria Husband & Dave Husband
SET DESIGN & PROPS	Victoria Husband & Rachel Bunting
SOUND TECHNICIANS	Sparks Theatre Management
LIGHTING TECHNICIANS	Sparks Theatre Management
PROGRAMME	Becci Alberti-King
VIDEOGRAPHER	JHC Video Services - Phil Steels
SAFEGUARDING LEAD	Victoria Husband
LEAD CHAPERONE	Carole Levy
CHAPERONES	Parents and Carers

CAST LIST

Cinderella	Ava Evans
Buttons	George Partington
Baron Hardup	Michael Brickell
Baroness Hardup	June Moore
Gertrude	Harry Melling
Grizelda	Ned Evans
Prince Charming	Erin Kay
Dandini	Freddie Shaw
Bodget	Poppy Adamson
Leggett	Evelyn Earnshaw
Fairy Godmother	Freya Sibson
Chambers	Xander Harrison

Hagan the Horse

Emie Ellwood & Megan Heaton

JUNIOR ENSEMBLE

Thea Kennedy
Blake Powell-Knowles
Hannah Sibson
Amelia Fagan
Matilda Jones
Sophie Clarke
Tristan Campbell
Meraya Armstrong
Annabelle Taylor
Sophie Duggan
James Earnshaw
Sophia Coleman-Celis
Lydia Park
Halle Ellwood-Morton
Grace Lonie
Henry Hobson

SENIOR ENSEMBLE

James Minshull
Daisy Griffiths
Emie Ellwood
Shantel Clarke
Megan Heaton

DANCERS

Maisie Stevens
Célestielle Rugero-Birch
Macie Jones
Scarlett Clark
Emelia Green
Bella Doyle
Skye Clarke
Aurélie Cizero-Birch
Bella-Rose Taylor
Lolly Atkins
Renee Flowers

DATE OF PERFORMANCE	Thursday 22nd January 2026
DATE REPORT PUBLISHED	Saturday 24th January 2024
ADJUDICATOR ID	NSA0003
NSA LOGO ON POSTER	Yes
NSA IN PROGRAMME	Yes
PROGRAMME CLASS	Original Licensed Basic

THE REVIEW

REVIEW WORD COUNT	1846
STRONGEST ELEMENTS	A Perfectly Paired Ugly Stepsisters

- With brash costumes, bold character work, and infectious energy, **Harry Melling** and **Ned Evans'** Gertrude and Grizelda were a gloriously comic highlight – a perfectly paired Ugly Stepsister duo who brought relentless joy, laughter, and theatrical flair to the stage.

Smiles, Spirit, and Stage Magic

- With smiles, energy, and unmistakable joy, the **Ensemble** created an atmosphere of celebration that flowed through the entire production.

Dressed in Magic

- Bursting with colour and theatrical sparkle, the **costumes** transformed the stage into a vibrant spectacle.

January's chill was quickly softened by a night at the theatre, the perfect way to beat the winter blues.

As someone who genuinely loves panto, I've never believed it should be confined to the festive season alone and **Tameside Youth Drama Group's** production of **Cinderella** offered a lovely reminder of that.

As always, I received a warm welcome from the volunteers at Hyde Festival Theatre. My guest and I settled into our seats, ready to enjoy an evening of theatre that promised comfort, charm, and a welcome escape from the January cold.

The pantomime follows the much-loved story of Cinderella: a kind-hearted young woman forced into a life of drudgery by her cruel stepmother and her two comically unpleasant stepsisters. With dreams bigger than her circumstances, Cinderella's life is transformed when a

magical Fairy Godmother appears, helping her attend Prince Charming's grand ball, complete with a dazzling transformation, a glittering carriage, and the iconic glass slipper.

Amid all the sparkle and romance, the panto delivers plenty of laughter, audience interaction, and comic chaos, as the Prince searches the kingdom to find the mysterious girl who captured his heart before the clock struck midnight.

This production of *Cinderella* felt especially meaningful for Tameside Youth Drama Group, as Principal **Rachel Bunting** shared that the company is proudly celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. The performance also served as a touching tribute to one of the group's founding members, the late **Barrie Thorpe**, who we were told had a great love for *Cinderella*, which was chosen as it held special significance for him as his favourite pantomime. Adding even more emotional weight, the show featured some of Barrie's favourite songs, including 'Fame', making the performance not just a celebration of theatre, but a heartfelt commemoration of legacy, community, and the lasting impact of those who helped build the company, a truly lovely and respectful tribute.

The staging was simple and functional, making sensible use of the space with a minimal set, a practical decision given the large cast of 42 performers. Different scenes and locations were suggested through cloth backdrops, with brick-style artwork on the flats and rose detailing adding a traditional theatre feel. While the set itself was limited, it was balanced by a variety of props and visual elements, including an oven that burst into flames and the essential magical carriage, large enough for Cinderella to sit in. Overall, the staging was effective and serviceable, supporting the storytelling without ever becoming a major feature in its own right.

The costumes, coordinated by **Carole Levy**, were bright and colourful - exactly what you'd expect from a pantomime, and added plenty of visual energy to the production. With numerous costume changes for the dancers and ensemble, it was clearly no small task, and the organisation behind the scenes was evident. While the overall standard was solid, there were a few standout pieces that really caught the eye, particularly the Fairy Godmother's elegant dress and Cinderella's effulgent ballgown, which struck just the right balance of sparkle and stage presence without feeling over the top.

Lighting and sound were provided by **Sparks Theatre Management**, and both were handled competently throughout the performance. The lighting created a clear contrast between the bright, lively village scenes and the darker, more atmospheric woodland moments, helping to define each setting effectively. Sound levels were generally well balanced, and although there were a couple of minor microphone issues, these were dealt with quickly and professionally. Overall, dialogue and vocals remained clear, making the technical side of the production supportive and reliable rather than distracting.

It was clear that a great deal of thought and preparation had gone into the direction of the production, with well-defined characters and a confident, organised ensemble who clearly understood their positioning and made sure they remained visible to the whole audience. Under the direction of **Rachel Bunting**, the show felt structured and cohesive, even with such a large cast on stage. Choreography, planned by **Becci Alberti-King, Victoria Husband** and

Katie Dearnaley, added energy and variety to the performance, with particular highlights including the opening of Act Two and the lively '*Ballroom Blitz*' number. While I would have liked to see a little more confidence and more visible enjoyment from some of the dancers – something that could easily be attributed to opening night nerves, the ensemble routines were simple and effective, which ensured performers of all abilities were included. To further elevate future productions, it would be lovely to see more movement across the stage rather than static line formations, but this is a consideration for development rather than a criticism, and it certainly didn't detract from the overall performance.

Playing the title role, **Ava Evans** delivered a strong and assured performance, clearly understanding the emotional journey that Cinderella goes through. She was confident in her dialogue, with good projection throughout. Although there were moments where this tipped slightly into shouting, which should be something to be mindful of in future performances. Vocally, Ava showed real ability, with a particularly moving solo that was sung with genuine emotion and sensitivity. While this didn't detract from the overall quality of her performance, which I found sincere and engaging, it would be lovely to see Ava develop her vocal range towards the higher notes for future productions.

Buttons, played by **George Partington**, grew into the role as the performance progressed. He began a little timid, but his confidence clearly grew as the show went on, and by the later scenes it was obvious he was enjoying himself on stage. George worked beautifully with the other characters he shared the stage with, creating natural and believable moments together. He also formed a lovely connection with the audience, an essential part of any pantomime, making Buttons a consistently likeable and engaging presence throughout the production.

Baron and Baroness Hardup, played by **Michael Brickell** and **June Moore**, formed a strong and believable partnership on stage. Michael engaged well with the audience and showed a clear confidence in his dialogue, giving his character a solid stage presence throughout. June, who is new to Tameside Youth Drama Group, delivered a confident performance. I particularly enjoyed the '*Queen of Hearts*' energy that they brought to the role, which added personality and flair. To elevate their performance even further, consider more direct audience engagement, encouraging the boos and really leaning into the villainy of the evil stepmother. However, their scenes were still enjoyable and well played.

No *Cinderella* pantomime would be complete without a pair of truly memorable Ugly Stepsisters, and Gertrude and Grizelda, played by **Harry Melling** and **Ned Evans**, certainly lived up to that expectation. They were a perfectly matched duo, fully committing to the comedy through their brash costumes, extravagant wigs, exaggerated mannerisms, and convincing cockney accents. It was clear that both performers relished these roles and were having enormous fun on stage, which translated brilliantly to the audience. They remained completely in character at all times, confidently engaging with the audience and infusing every scene they appeared in with consistent energy. A shout-out has to go out to Harry for completing the entire performance in heels...and also to Ned for breaking two pairs before show week even began – a level of dedication only pantomime can demand.

Fairy G, played by **Freya Sibson**, acted as both narrator and guiding presence throughout the story, and she delivered the role with warmth and assurance. Her dialogue was spoken beautifully and with genuine emotion, giving the audience a strong sense that they were in safe hands with their storyteller. A more definitive contrast between her Fairy Godmother and the Old Woman character would assist in heightening the impact of the reveal, she maintained a great pace throughout and showed a strong command of her lines. Her solo performance of '*Journey to the Past*' was sung beautifully and perfectly suited the moment, adding a touching and well-placed emotional beat to the production.

Erin Kay, playing Prince Charming, delivered a solid and reliable performance in the role. She worked well alongside Cinderella and Dandini, with clear, confident interactions on stage. She gave a good performance, contributing positively to the overall production. Prince Charming's right-hand man, Dandini, played by **Freddie Shaw**, brought strong stage presence and a clear sense of confidence to the role. He looked comfortable on stage and at ease within the character, which made his performance engaging to watch. As with Freya's dual-role transformation, a more defined contrast between his Dandini persona and the moments where he poses as the Prince would have enhanced the character, but this didn't distract from the overall performance, which remained confident, consistent, and enjoyable.

Bodgett and Leggett, the delightfully silly construction workers tasked with redeveloping the Baron's home, were played by **Poppy Adamson** and **Evelyn Earnshaw**, who worked extremely well together as a comic duo. They leaned fully into the contrasting character types, with Poppy's Bodgett playing the more sensible, grounded half of the partnership, while Evelyn's Leggett brought a fun-loving, playful energy to the role. Their chemistry was effective, creating clear double-act dynamics, with their scenes delivering some genuinely funny moments - particularly the slapstick comedy involving an inflatable hammer, which was a simple but very effective piece of physical humour.

Chambers, played by **Xander Harrison**, was well-spoken and carried his royal duties with appropriate authority. He delivered his lines clearly and confidently, fitting the role of the royal announcer, and added a sense of formality and structure to the proceedings whenever he appeared on stage.

Emie Ellewood and **Megan Heaton** took on the role of Hagen the Horse, the traditional pantomime steed. It was clear how tricky the role can be when sharing a full horse costume and relying so closely on one another as a performing pairing. Further development around timing the horse cues and stronger responses with the audience could have elevated the animal. Even so, their performance was entertaining and added a playful touch to the pantomime.

The **Junior and Senior Ensemble**, many of whom are new to the society, were a great addition to the production, and it was clear that every single performer was genuinely enjoying their time on stage. The dedication they brought to rehearsing the musical numbers was evident, and those with lines performed them confidently, often unmic'd, with impressive clarity and projection.

I must mention **Grace Lonie**, whose enthusiasm shone brightly in the group numbers, she's someone to watch as she continues to grow in future productions. **Tristan Campbell** also deserves recognition for performing two solos with impressive skill for someone so young. I would also like to acknowledge the performers who were the little ghosts; silly costumes, a silly scene, but full of joy and energy, making them some of the most delightfully excited ghosts I've ever seen - a perfect touch of panto fun and mischief.

Overall, my guest and I had a thoroughly enjoyable evening, full of laughter and the perfect antidote to the January blues. Congratulations to everyone at Tameside Youth Drama Group - keep up the great work, enjoy your 40th anniversary celebrations, and we can't wait to see what you have planned next.

PHOTOGRAPHS



PROGRAMME

HYDE Festival THEATRE

Sparks act

Tameside Youth Drama Group
presents

By arrangement with Stage Right Creative

Script by Alan P Frayn

Cinderella

22nd - 24th January 2026
Hyde Festival Theatre

Souvenir Programme