



Show Report

SOUP Productions

Pantoville

06 December 2025

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

PRODUCTION	Pantoville
SOCIETY	SOUP Productions
VENUE	St Thomas' Church Hall
GENRE	Pantomime
CAST SIZE	18
DIRECTOR	Michael Pirks
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	Josh Hopson
VOCAL DIRECTOR	Jo Preston
CHOREOGRAPHY TEAM	Josh Hopson, Abi Narraway, Janine Roberts, Samantha-Jane Twigg
WRITER	Michael Pirks
PROPS CO-ORDINATOR	Josh Hopson
SET DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION	Drew Gosney, Ruth Gosney, Michelle Drinkwater, Colin Drinkwater, Emmett Drinkwater
COSTUME CO-ORDINATOR	Sam Duxbury and Jo Preston
MAKE-UP ARTIST	Abigail Smith
PRODUCTION & TECHNICAL ASSISTANT	Emmett Drinkwater
SCENE PROJECTION	Josh Gosney
CAST PHOTOGRAPHY	Colin Drinkwater (Jorube Portrait Photography)
PROGRAMME DESIGN	Jo Preston
POSTER DESIGN	Samantha-Jane Twigg

CAST LIST

Dotty	Sam Duxbury
Prince Bridgerton	Harry Twining
Selena	Jo Preston
Wacky Wally	Andy McQuoid
Dee Dog	Josh Hopson
Whiskas	Lisa Rhodes
Cinderella	Barbara Hebden
Rapunzel	Samantha Jane
Snow White	Corynne Dittrich
Sparkles the Fairy PA	Jayne Dittrich
Jack	Michelle Drinkwater
Cracker	Marcus Cameron

Captain Hook and Others	Andy Kenny
Trixie and Others	Lesley Hall
Trudy and Others	Ruth Gosney
Broomhilda and Others	Janine Roberts
Rumpelstiltskin and Others	Marilyn Baxter
Frog Princess and Others	Anna Probert

DATE OF PERFORMANCE	Saturday 6th December 2025
DATE REPORT PUBLISHED	Monday 8th December 2025
ADJUDICATOR ID	NSA<<ID Number>>
NSA LOGO ON POSTER	No
NSA IN PROGRAMME	No
PROGRAMME CLASS	Best Original Design

THE REVIEW

REVIEW WORD COUNT	1495
STRONGEST ELEMENTS	Powerful Performances

- **Josh Hopson** delivered a powerful performance as Dee Dog, showing exceptional energy, commitment and character detail.
- **Harry Twining** as Prince Bridgerton, brought strong vocals with a natural charm and stage presence.

Bold, Intelligent Direction and Structure

- **Michael Pirks** and **Josh Hopson** shaped the production with clear, creative direction and thoughtful structural choices.

Striking and Cohesive Design Choices

- **Emmett Drinkwater** enhanced the storytelling with precise, polished sound effects that added real cohesion to the show.

This was our first time adjudicating a SOUP Productions show, and from the moment Pantoville began, it was obvious we were stepping into something genuinely original. **Michael Pirks'** lively writing and direction sat right at the heart of it, introducing us to a quirky little world filled with all the familiar fairytale characters we know, but with plenty of twists and playful storytelling woven in. There was a real sense of the halcyon days in Pantoville before Selena set the baddies loose, and that warmth carried right through the first act. The cast and creative team brought so much energy and imagination to the stage that Pantoville became an uplifting, charming introduction to SOUP Productions' work.

We follow Dotty's journey as she searches for her own happily-ever-after, and **Sam Duxbury** gave the character a wonderfully natural, quirky edge. She had a bright, engaging presence on stage and interacted with the rest of the cast with total ease. Her facial reactions were often little moments of comedy all on their own, adding extra humour and making Dotty instantly likeable.

Her dynamic with Prince Bridgerton, played by **Harry Twining**, was really enjoyable to watch. The two shared an easy, natural chemistry, which made their scenes feel warm and authentic. Harry's performance was strong across the board – his vocals were impressive, and he kept that polished "perfect prince" accent throughout the show. His physicality during the moments where Selena's spell took hold was especially effective.

Selena, played by **Jo Preston**, was a wonderfully shaped pantomime villain. She had real confidence in the role, commanding the stage with a bold presence and a very clear understanding of who her character was. Her wicked laugh was a particular highlight – pitched just right every time – and her physicality gave every entrance and interaction an extra dash of flair. Her vocal work was strong too. The only thing that might elevate her puppet scenes even further is shifting more of her focus directly to the puppets rather than the puppeteers, which would help keep the illusion fully intact for the audience.

Jayne Dittrich as Sparkles the Fairy PA lit up the stage the moment she stepped on. She brought a fun, sassy energy and nailed the comedic timing throughout. Her physicality was expressive and confident, and her characterisation – especially the exaggerated "American advert PPI" voice – added a lovely extra layer of humour. She carried every scene with charm and commitment, making Sparkles one of the memorable characters of the production.

Wacky Wally, played by **Andy McQuoid**, brought a warm and silly sense of fun to the stage. He had a clear grasp of his character and interacted well with the rest of the cast, creating playful comic moments that landed well with the audience. The choice to incorporate the sparkly beard was a very funny touch, adding even more goofiness to his performance.

Josh Hopson's portrayal of Dee Dog was packed with commitment and charm, especially considering how demanding it is to play an animal convincingly on stage. He fully embraced that excitable golden-retriever energy – eager, friendly, and utterly delighted by everyone he met. He even added a little sass, which worked beautifully. His physicality was relentless in the best sense; he bounded around the stage, sniffing, pawing, tilting his head, and reacting in ways that felt genuinely dog-like. Even when he was simply waiting to exit, he stayed completely in character. His vocal work – the barking, the whimpering – was effective without ever becoming distracting. His bond with the prince felt authentic and captured that "man's best friend" relationship perfectly.

Lisa Rhodes, as Whiskers, acted as the feline narrator of Pantoville and delivered her narration in a refined English accent that suited the role very well. Her timing and wit added a sparkle to her performance, and her physicality as a cat was one of the highlights. She moved with that

graceful, slightly aloof feline quality – almost gliding across the stage. It reminded both me and my guest of my own cat, which was lovely to see reflected on stage. In the longer monologues, taking a breath at natural pauses would help the text flow even more smoothly, but overall Lisa was a charming and memorable Whiskers.

Barbara Hebden's Cinderella brought a refreshing twist to the classic character, playing her with quirky, OCD tendencies that created a fun contrast to the traditional soft and gentle version. Instead, she gave us a tough, no-nonsense Cinderella, and it was genuinely funny to watch. Barbara showed a strong emotional range, moving easily between humour and sincerity, and she helped create a lively dynamic within the trio of princesses.

Samantha Jane brought a distinctive spark to Rapunzel, with great comedic timing and a slightly self-absorbed humour that worked perfectly for the character. Despite that comedic edge, she also came across as a loyal friend within the princess trio. Her dancing was confident and added a lot to her overall performance.

Snow White, played by **Corynne Dittrich**, delivered a very charming performance – especially impressive considering she stepped into the role only six weeks ago while the rest of the cast had much longer time to rehearse. She handled her lines well, showed clear direction, and gave Snow White a playful but slightly “mean girl” twist, which added a fresh spin to the character.

Jack the parrot, performed by **Michelle Drinkwater**, was a sweet addition to the show. Michelle's diction was clear, and she handled the puppet smoothly, giving Jack believable reactions and movements. Her squawky parrot voice was very effective. It would be lovely to see a little more of Michelle's own facial expression at times as that could deepen her connection with the audience.

Cracker, performed by **Marcus Cameron**, was full of energy and had great precision. His facial expressions matched his puppet work beautifully, making Cracker a lively and convincing character. His goofy parrot voice added humour, and he kept the puppet expressive and engaging throughout.

Janine Roberts' Broomhilda was a bold presence on stage. She showed strong vocals and handled the wicked-witch physicality very well. She stayed firmly in character even in background moments, which added atmosphere and showed real commitment.

The ensemble – **Andy Kenny** as Captain Hook and the Policeman, **Lesley Hall** as Trixie and Mother Hen, **Ruth Gosney** as Trudy and Mother Goose, **Marilyn Baxter** as Rumpelstiltskin and the Shoemaker, and **Anna Probert** as the Frog Princess, Little Red, and the Wolf – gave the production a lively backbone. They distinguished their multiple characters clearly and supported the storytelling with strong reactive acting, helping scenes flow smoothly.

Writer and director **Michael Pirks** created a clever and imaginative story, full of humour and inventive twists. His script gave Pantoville a solid foundation, mixing classic pantomime charm with fresh ideas. From a directing standpoint, with **Josh Hopson** assisting, it was clear that everyone on stage understood their purpose and direction. Their vision came through strongly, and they brought the story to life with clarity and enthusiasm.

Vocal director **Jo Preston** supported the cast well, and there were several moments where the vocals really shone. With continued development of the less experienced singers, the overall vocal balance will only improve further.

Choreographers **Josh Hopson, Abi Narraway, Janine Roberts,** and **Samantha Jane Twigg** created fun and fitting routines throughout the show. The dance-off and the princess trio routine were standout moments.

The set design team – **Drew Gosney, Ruth Gosney, Michelle Drinkwater, Colin Drinkwater,** and **Emmett Drinkwater** – used the space thoughtfully. The permanent platform at the back worked particularly well, helping to add height and variation to scenes. The purple throne for Selena and the simple bench for the forest scene were effective touches that anchored each setting.

Lighting design by **Emmett Drinkwater** was well executed, with the moving LEDs adding depth and interest. The screen projector, operated by **Josh Gosney,** contributed strongly to the storytelling.

The sound design, also by Emmett Drinkwater, was one of the standout elements. The many sound cues were timed perfectly, enhancing both the humour and the pacing. Microphone cues landed cleanly, and every performer was heard clearly – a real testament to Emmett's attention to detail.

Costumes, designed by **Sam Duxbury** and **Jo Preston,** brought together a mix of traditional pantomime style and more modern pieces. At times the mix created a slightly inconsistent overall aesthetic, but there were definite standout moments, especially Sparkles' bright, colourful costumes, which suited her character beautifully.

Abigail Smith's makeup designs added boldness and colourful characterisation to the show, complementing the larger-than-life pantomime style.

Overall, Pantoville was imaginative, lively, and full of heart. There was clear passion from everyone involved, and the show was filled with thoughtful touches and standout moments. I'd also like to express my sincere thanks to Michael Pirks for his warm hospitality; it was a pleasure chatting with him and hearing more about his directing process and the heart behind the company. I wish SOUP Productions the very best with their upcoming shows, and I genuinely can't wait to see what they create next.

PHOTOGRAPHS







PROGRAMME

