

A 'Magic and Spectacular' time at the Minack

A total of 70 cast, crew and musicians returned home at the beginning of June tired but very satisfied after The Barnstormers' successful week at the Minack Theatre in Cornwall performing their acclaimed production of 'Into the Woods'. They enjoyed both full houses and fine weather and the Minack proved a spectacular setting for this Sondheim musical, which The Barnstormers first presented at the Barn back in April. The audiences and cast were even treated to three magical evenings with clear starry skies and a full moon reflecting across the sea, providing the perfect backdrop for this musical fantasy telling the story of a group of familiar Grimm's fairy tale characters journeying 'Into the Woods' in search of 'happy ever after'.

Once again the Barnstormers will be donating all profits from this production to the 'Barn 2000' Appeal and we are told that the final total will be announced in the next issue of BTN. Our congratulations and thanks to The Barnstormers for all their efforts for 'Barn 2000' over the years and we look forward with great interest to details of their next production.

Photographs of the Minack and Barn productions of 'Into the Woods' are now available to view on The Barnstormers website at www.thebarnstormers.org and the newspaper review of the Minack production is re-produced below.

Well done again to all concerned. A truly 'magic and spectacular' production.....

"Magic and spectacular"

"At the Minack with Frank Ruhrmund"
from The Cornishman - Thursday 3rd June 2004

"Once upon a time, in the early 19th century, the brothers Grimm compiled an anthology of German fairy tales, and it came to pass that long afterwards, in the late 20th century, the American composer and lyricist Stephen Sondheim borrowed several of their stories, among them that of *Cinderella*, *Red Riding Hood* and *Jack and the Beanstalk*, and with his own imaginative additions and the help of James Lapine's book, wrote the musical *Into the Woods*, which the East Surrey-based Barnstormers now bring to the Minack for the first time and in a way that can only be called spectacular.

A musical which has been described as being "a fairy tale for the age of destruction through which we are living", in keeping with the best of fairy tales it has both its light and often very funny side and its darker and Grimm eye-pecking side, and is told in

two halves so distinct that you could leave at the interval - following the fireworks - happy in the knowledge that you have already had more than your money's worth. With hindsight I rather wish I had been spared the mish-mash of moralising and philosophising, the need to find the best in oneself and "no one is alone" bit, of the second act.



As bewitching as the production is, its "tower" and its technical wizardry in general are something else, at the same time it also bothers and bewilders, with its two-sided aspect making it difficult to decide which to plump for, the players or the splendid set on which they strut their stuff. This coupled with Stephen Sondheim's sparkling lyrics that come at you with speed, suggests that one sitting provides but a taste, and that a second, even a third, sitting is needed to get to the meat of the piece. One of the few quips I managed to note, for instance, was the Wolf's confession to Red Riding Hood: "There's no possible way to describe how you feel, when you're talking to your meal!"

A bitter-sweet, Grimm-Sondheim, fairy tale for adults with a super score - *Agony to No More* - in which every Barnstormer, the seen and the unseen alike, performs magnificently, it is pure magic."

Audrey Beer

Audrey Beer, widow of Frank for more than four years, passed away on 5th June 2004, seven days before her 75th birthday. She was a valued contralto singer with the Oxted Operatic Society from 1964 to 1980. For many years she worked as a nurse at Oxted and Edenbridge hospitals and finished her working years at Paydens the Chemist in Oxted. Audrey enjoyed life as a dizzy blonde, full of fun and bringing happiness to everyone who met her. A kind and compassionate person her need to help others continued after her retirement at the Red Cross Charity Shop and Oxfam, both in Oxted. She will be missed by her friends and family.