

Pantomime was an attention keeper

Aladdin, The Anvil, Basingstoke

WIDOW Twankey has to be the funniest character in Aladdin at The Anvil Basingstoke, which runs until January 5, 2020.

What makes this Nic Gibney's role so enjoyable, is the excellent Westcountry accent and the range of costumes and hairstyles. Yes, a Westcountry woman in China, running a laundry. Stranger things must have happened.

Old Twankey is mother of Aladdin (Mark Rhodes) and Wishee Washee (Christopher Pizzey, also Director). When Wishee Washee goes through the laundry mangle "he's flat out at the moment" according to Twankey. Then when Aladdin (Mark Rhodes) is chased by PC Pong (Charlie Guest), his mum pushes him into the washing



machine. After a few cycles he shrinks and makes his escape.

"Where were you between five and seven?" questions PC Pong to Twankey: "School," comes the reply...

Following some slapstick comedy, Widow Twankey

instructs Wishee Washee and PC Pong not to touch the lever and not to make a mess. After she leaves the inevitable happens to roars of delight from the children.

But it's when Widow Twankey bows with loud flatulence as she greets the Emperor (Andrew

Gallo) that my wife erupts into fits of giggles.

There are plenty of songs but the strongest has to be Higher Love performed by Princess Jasmine (Ashleigh Mackness).

Lovers of accents will also be delighted by Abanazar's (Mark Moraghan) Liverpoolian: "Calm down, calm down," he insists and much else besides.

Other aspects of the performance hold the attention further still. Real flames shoot up from the stage floor, there are sparklers on one of the scene changes and the magic carpet ride cleverly employs digital technology.

It takes a lot to keep the attention of three children aged eight and under for two hours but they've achieved it; there was no restlessness whatsoever.

Review by Tim Saunders