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## Ross Petty's Cinderella filled with comic glee

Elgin Theatre's annual Christmas pantomime, has that feel-good sensation that sends you home grinning.



Dan Chameroy, Danielle Wade and Eddie Glen in Cinderella

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## Cinderella

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Book by Reid Janisse. Directed by Tracey Flye. Until Jan. 4 at the Elgin Theatre, 189 Yonge St. 1-855-599-9090

It wouldn't be the holiday season without Ross Petty's annual family musical, and this year's entry, *Cinderella*, which opened at the Elgin Theatre on Thursday night is a very good example of the form, with a lot of virtues and a couple of vices but an overall feel-good sensation that sends you home grinning.

At this point in time, what you cherish the most is the mixture of old and new that keeps the pot bubbling each year.

On the elder side, there's Petty himself, dispensing villainy in drag like no one else and generating more boos than a fire sale at the LCBO. His wicked stepmother this year, named *Revolta Bulldoza*, is one of his best creations - haughty, naughty and dressed in 50 shades of mauve. Top it all off with hair that looks like Lucille Ball on acid and you've got an original comic creation.

Right there behind him is Dan Chameroy, whose depiction of that definitely different dame called *Plumbum* is an endless source of comic glee. This year she's been given a useful role in the narrative, as the Fairy Godmother, instead of being shoehorned in for comic relief. The end result is a laugh riot. If there's anything that man can't do with his wand, I don't want to know about it.

The trifecta of comedy veterans is completed by Eddie Glen, whose more subtle, easygoing style of humour can get lost in the shuffle against the big guns like Petty and Chameroy. But listen closely to the dry, barbed witticisms he drops like grenades into the action and you'll see a master at work. His *Buttons* is also an endearing figure, truly fond of his charge, *Cinderella*.

The new faces this year include Danielle Wade's *Cinderella* and Jeff Lillico's *Max Charming* and they're a perfectly matched pair. Both of them are just such genuinely nice people that you want to cheer for them from the start, and when you add Wade's killer pipes and Lillico's devastating charm, you've got a fine romantic couple.

There's also a neat eight-person ensemble (Gabriel Antonacci, David Ball, Jacqueline Burtney, Lindsay Croxall, Nicko Giannakos, David Light, Jennifer Mote and Briana Caitlyn Palmer) who execute Robin Calvert's witty choreography with style and implement all of director Tracey Flye's best comedy ideas.

For the second year in a row, the projection designs of Ben Chaisson and Beth Kates really steal the show and make it look like a multimillion dollar musical for a fraction of the cost. As well, Michael Gianfrancesco's sets and costumes are as droll and colourful as you could wish for. Kudos, as always to Bob Foster for a zippy yet tasteful job of musical direction.

When it works, which is most of the time, it works wonderfully well. But it would be so much better if there were just a bit less of it to love.

But I would gladly sit through it again for the first act curtain, when *Cinderella*, in all her glory, sets off for the ball. It's the kind of shiver-inducing moment you go to the theatre for, the sort of thing that kids in the audience may very well remember forever.

And that's a very good thing indeed. Thank you, Mr. Petty.