In the run-up to Christmas, a good panto should be something on everybody’s to-do list, and if you’re stuck for choice this year then Charles Court Opera’s bawdy performance of The Three Musketeers is most definitely the one to see. Sure to send you back to your childhood.

Hidden away above the Rosemary Branch Pub, the theatre room is cramped and cosy, creating a wonderful atmosphere for all the “He’s behind you!” antics. The annual boutique panto from the Charles Court Opera group has clearly become a favourite amongst locals, as the audience was packed to the rafters. This particular performance is sure to send you back to your childhood; it’s a wonderful mix of cream pies, sing-along songs and naughty jokes.

The stage is adorned with red and white gingham, and baguette loafs and onions in hilariously stereotypical French style. John Savournin’s writing and directing is spot on, managing to capture the childish nature of the pantomime whilst throwing in some spectacular musical numbers (a particularly raucous rendition of Bright Eyes has the audience in stitches) and just the right amount of dud jokes.

The pantomime is carried by the character of Mother Superior, a hilariously raunchy old nun, and backed up by solid performances from the rest of the cast. Amy J Payne is particularly amusing as the drunkard Pathos, and Kevin Jones has the audience booing and hissing as the wicked Cardinal Richelieu.

The Three Musketeers follows the traditional pantomime equation perfectly with the meek hero, the damsel in distress, the baddie and the drag act, but it’s Savournin’s eye for humour which sets it apart as a must-see this festive season; the play is a spectacle of sex, alcohol and, oddly enough, baking. Just try not to succumb to the advances of Mother Superior if you’re lucky enough to be a man in the front row.

Verdict: ●●●●●

Caitlin Middleton