

Beauty and the Beast is a tale that has been through many iterations since it was written in 1740.

Not only has the original story been amended frequently over the years, but it has also appeared as an opera, a play and several films.

The latest musical interpretation is based on the 1991 Disney animated version and it is that that WOW! (Witham Operatic Workshop) turned to for their latest production.

As in all their shows – this is the 30th – it displays the outstanding talents of the district's young actors, 33 of them, aged between 11 and 18, who turn in a vibrant, colourful evening.

The show is anchored by a stand-out performance from Georgina Warren as Beauty. Rarely off stage, she brings poise and assurance - and a delightful singing voice - to the central role.

Alongside her, Frank Thornton is a superb Beast, with an alarming growl and a powerful voice before turning on his tender side as the story evolves.

Sam Howard is amusing as Gaston, the ultimate chauvinist with an almost Trumpian self-regard, while Max Midgely is exhilarating as his foil. At 13, he is clearly one to watch for future.

Madison O'Grady, Lucy Goodman, Luc Roberts, Harry Courtney and Amelia Bennett also shine as the servants turned into various household objects.

Kitting them out as a teapot, clock, cup etc alongside the numerous costume changes was a mammoth task for those backstage, who deserve their congratulations alongside the cast.