

National Operatic & Dramatic Association

Report



Society : The Richings Players

Production : Dangerous Corner

Date : 13/10/05

Venue : Iver Village Hall

Report by : Steven Jarrett

An overview

Thank you for inviting me to see my first production as the NODA rep officially for region 11A for many years I did area 11 and supported both Mike Smith and John Draper but now I am your rep - I hope I can live up to the expectations of all the groups and societies around.

Also I would welcome any approach to do a workshop for you or come in after a show and do any de-briefing with the Director and cast - if you want it!

Expectations

The last time I saw this play was many years ago and I couldn't remember the end, and as I was only officially invited the day before I couldn't read it in advance - and I am glad I didn't because that would have spoilt the wonderful build up to complex tangled web of relationships which no one in the audience nor in the cast truly ever uncovered nor understood. There are so many relationships; I lost count at 12 different combinations of pairings and trios involved in some tenuous way or another, it was like being at home really!!!!!!

I was lucky enough to see Godspell, which was so good that I wanted you at least equal it and if possible to move on again pushing out the boundaries and stretching your cast. You have suddenly become an innovative group who take risks and challenge the status quo - and I love that!

Front of house

I always get a lovely welcome at least 2 drinks and a big smile and this sets me up before I have even taken my seat. Thank you.

Programme

Another very good programme with all the information you could want.

Setting and Staging

This was great, to do this in the round really worked as we became a part of the set and it almost created that watching in on TV atmosphere, I would love to have seen this 3 times from all three aspects as I believe I would have got 3 very different plays.

The only criticism is that we needed to be raked as we could only see the top of heads when people sat down.

I know the cost prohibited you but this is where the committee needs to take risks. Put the seat prices up to £10 and say why you have. If you are going to go for something - go for it! Don't go halfway. You can't take a quantum leap by putting your foot down in the middle. In these situations, to get what you want, you don't give away any free tickets to anyone, and have no concessions or only a £1 off for concessions and explain why.

You can work out your break-even point and divide it amongst the bums of seats you are likely to get and do a show for no or little profit. Some societies even do one show a year, which is a loss maker just so that they can stretch the cast or put on something, they want to do.

Loved the curtains albeit made it very warm, but created a lovely atmosphere.

Direction

Was good and Sarah Deny-Jones has challenged the group, the cast, and the audience. She controlled and under-played the action well and kept the pace up. Doing this in the round worked as it keeps us sucked into the action and a part of it - not remote. Every angle gave a different version of the play and the characters were well set early and consistent. The cast was at home with their characters and we could clearly see she had spent a lot of time working on who each person was.

Have some fun, and do review as to what happened after the play was over and how they felt it went and where they felt it could have been improved.

The thing that made this play for me is that you made Martin so believable that I could almost give him feedback too!

The relationships between the characters were great with interaction between everyone and someone, either blatantly in our faces or so subtly that we had to discuss it on the way home.

Sound & Lights

Were very good - this was a well-lit set and the sound effects very good.

Costumes

Excellent, I especially loved the dresses, which were just wonderful.

Great set & props too with lovely furniture and the floor was just fantastic.

Movement, Voices and general production

The audience needed to be raised onto a platform to see properly, the cast moved well but in scene 2, Robert did a bit too much pacing two steps forwards, two steps back between two other characters. One or two characters bordered on gabbling as the pace got to a break neck speed on occasions. The voices were very good and all had nice accents. Sometimes the move from one emotion to another was too quick. From calm to anger in a second could have been stretched over a longer period building rather than just arriving.

Cast Notes

Freda played by Joe Gibbs controlled act one beautifully and had wonderful stage presence and had a sullen but sexy character, which from the very beginning had sinister undertones and a slightly dangerous personality, the sort of woman any man would fall for and then regret it. Now onto the character she played!!!! This was for me a stunning performance of real quality and her emotions were excellent. In Act One she was the controller, in Act Two she controlled, and by Act Three was vulnerable and exposed.

Her use of comic timing under played and with wonderful use of pause especially on the line about sandwiches was not only really funny but gave us a 'moment' of relief from the intensity.

Miss Mockeridge played by Sue McCoan was very good too and although absent for much of the play set the scene up well and asked the right questions at the right time and in the right way.

Betty played by Madeleine Taylor was beautiful and had such grace and poise; she walked with an attitude and her facial expressions were very good.

Angela Strach as Olwen Peel gave us another lovely performance and showed very subtly her emotions for others both on the stage and absent!

Michael Lucas as Charles again gave us a strong performance and used his height well and his piercing eye contact with great aplomb. He should have had his hair cut for the sake of his art!

Will Torrent as Gordon was very good with an all round performance of control and energy, his emotions were used to help others to re-act and his acting off was just wonderful.

Kirk Wootton as Robert grew throughout the production and took control gradually from Freda, handed it on to others and then took it back, on occasions like a dog with a bone, he just wouldn't let go. A powerful performance like they all were really.

In summary and conclusion

I am not even going to try and explain the complex weave of differing relationships and undertones of sexuality between all the characters on stage and the one off stage! But suffice to say that this was a truly strong team performance without a weak link and delivered with energy, pace and accuracy. It held the audience spellbound and although it was too hot and we could see all the action this was a production of a very high standard.

As a group you have moved up a gear over the last few productions and now are seen as one of the strongest societies in the area.

Can you keep the quality here or move up another notch? Can you continue to be as innovative with your next production? Can you once again challenge the Director, the committee and the cast to challenge the audience as you did here?

It was a lovely evening and I enjoyed it immensely, thank you.

Stephen Jarrett, NODA Rep, Oct 2005