

# National Operatic & Dramatic Association

## *Report*



**Society : The Richings Players**

**Production : The Imaginary Invalid**

**Date : 19/06/03**

**Venue : Iver Village Hall**

**Report by : John Draper**

### **THE PRODUCTION**

My last exposure to Molière was reading *Le Misanthrope* as a set book for A level French and I recall that I did not really appreciate Molière's wit and craftsmanship. My visit to Iver last week changed that perception. SUE McCOAN's choice she described as "getting away from standard bedroom farce". This was an inspired decision and the Richings Players justified her selection with a well crafted, entertaining evening.

### **STAGING AND SET**

The box set was excellent in its design and construction and beautifully painted in pleasing light colours. The Furniture and dressing was very well chosen and the combined effect gave exactly the right atmosphere. Congratulations to all the construction team and to NEIL KEVEREN & MARGARET WILKINS for the painting. Also I see credit is due to SYLVIA LIDGATE for some of the excellent furniture.

### **LIGHTING**

From the start, the lighting levels added perfection to the excellent overall effect. There were no shadows or missed bits, and although the lighting plot makes no complicated demands the meticulous attention given by ROBIN BISHOP certainly paid off.

### **SOUND also by ROBIN BISHOP**

There was an excellent choice of opening music and for the restarts. But why use sound amplification for the production? The auditorium is not large and the actors should certainly

have been able to project to the back. The result was many distracting occasions of feedback when the levels were turned up too high. For a musical, it would have been needed but don't give yourselves unnecessary opportunities for things technical to cause a problem.

## **COSTUME**

My early notes say "Angelica - Gorgeous dress" and scattered throughout the book are continued references to the quality and visual impact of the costumes. LINDA LUCAS, LINDA BOSTOCK, SYLVIA LIDGATE & SRA WILLIAMS did a great job.

## **THE CAST**

MIKE BUSSON was a wonderful Argan. At the beginning his delivery was a shade too quick but as the play progressed he slowed down which gave much greater effect to his excellent voice. This was especially important because Mike had to rely on voice and facial expressions much more than usual. And what expressions they were. So many times without a word being spoken his face spoke volumes. During the "bad singing" (which was brilliantly and cleverly done) Argan's pain was genuine and his eyes then and on so many other occasions were so wonderfully expressive. Now and again the accent slipped a bit but this was a part well cast and excellently performed.

Toinette played by LINDA BAINBRIDGE

Linda starred in this role. Her delivery was always beautifully phrased and her pace was perfect and it was to her credit that she slowed the pace early on when it looked like getting out of control. Her movements were fluid and assured and she has a great ability to deliver comedy with a wicked relish and obvious enjoyment. During the impersonation scene the 'allo, 'allo accent was a hilarious masterstroke. Very well played indeed.

Angelica

I have already mentioned how wonderful PAULA HARVEY looked and she matched that with a strong stage presence. She shared with Mike the early problem of excessive pace but again it was brought under control. Also she has a great voice. Every aspect of her presence contributed to an excellent interpretation of the role.

Bèline

MAUREEN WORRALL was also wonderfully costumed and she added a great quality of voice, stature and poise. Maureen has a great ability for slightly underplayed and therefore brilliant comedy. She had a couple of technical faults when moving off on the wrong foot and toward the end of the play suffered from a lack of pace which up till then had been perfect: but this did not detract from the high quality of the performance.

Monsieur Bonnefoy

PETER JACOB needed to relax his voice more. His delivery was often stilted and some words lost, with the result that the character was not "smooth" enough for a lawyer.

Dr Diaforus and Thomas

I have linked these two together because they were a good team and NEIL ELPHIK and JAMES HOWELLS worked well together. They very much looked the part and gave fine performances. Neil has a good voice but some of his gestures were a bit awkward and signalled in advance. Try to forget the stage directions, and let your moves be as natural as they are in real life. And James needs to avoid long static moments. I am not suggesting moves for the sake of moves but more reaction and animation would help. The doctor's speech to Argan about the medical profession was especially well presented

Clèante

KIRK WOOTTON deserves high praise for a great "getting myself out of trouble moment". He had lost his way towards the end of Act One and there seemed to be no help from the prompt, but Kirk rallied, picked up the lines and got back on course. After that briefest of moments, which probably seemed like forever to him, he continued to give a good confident performance.

Louise

CLARICE TAYLOR spent too long facing up-stage especially during her conversation with Argan. She has a great voice but the audience didn't see enough of her face and some volume was lost as a result. Her "faint" was terrific and this action that often proves difficult to do realistically was totally marvellous.

Monsieur Bèralde

ADRIAN UZZELL has great stagecraft and his movements were smooth and natural.

To ALL THE CAST congratulations are due. The individual contributions added up to a good all round performance.

## **DIRECTION**

This was a tightly controlled production by SUE McCOAN with well thought out moves, groupings and positioning. The entrances and exits were slick. There were some moments of confusion as if someone had moved the wrong way and these incidents need experience for improvement. I have mentioned the need to tighten up on some technicalities.

You obviously thought amplification was necessary. Try to get some coaching to improve voice projection if you feel people need it. You probably have the talent in house but if not I can find someone. It could be a fun evening workshop. On the assumption that the piano playing was recorded the pianist's arms were out of sync.

But these points though are minor compared with the end result. You gave an evening of high enjoyment, wonderful comedy and talented performances backed up by a good team.

## **STAGE MANAGEMENT AND FRONT OF HOUSE**

The production was well managed by EDDIE WOOD and the interval seemed much better organised. The programme was detailed and informative with a 100% increase in staples. My welcome, as always, was warm and friendly.

## **FINALLY**

Many congratulations on having the inspiration and courage to choose the play and the skills to present it so very well.

Knowing your production of "Twelve Angry Men" only by reputation. I shall look forward to "The Crucible" and I wish you well for 6<sup>th</sup> July.

Thank you as always for inviting me.

I have one last question. Why, after such a successful evening, did everyone on the final curtain look so glum?

*John C. Draper, NODA Rep, June 2003*

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## ***Audience Review***

On Thursday I went to see my friends perform in a theatre production at the Iver Village Hall (between Uxbridge and Slough). The show presented by the Richings Players was **The Imaginary Invalid** written by Molière and adapted by Miles Malleson.

I was very impressed with the show and I'm amazed at the amount of organisation that needs to take place and the effort put in by everybody for a play. Well done to all how made it such a success!

I look forward to the next production...

*Gwyn Cole, June 21 2003*