



Society : Chesham Theatre Company
Production : The Village Hall
Date : 15th March 2013
Venue : Little Theatre by the Park
Report by : Rita Carpenter

Report

INTRODUCTION

The foyer was very busy on arrival but we were soon greeted and shown to our seats. As it was a supper theatre the auditorium was set out with tables and chairs, each table seating 8. It was a very friendly atmosphere as everyone was unpacking their drinks, food and nibbles. The evening consisted of three one act plays involving the same characters.

THE JUMBLE SALE

Tony Savage played Mr Wrarkin the caretaker, a man full of his own importance who on entering gazed at the audience and spoke to them direct, assuming we were those attending the jumble sale with the intention of purchasing items. The Vicar was well played by **Paul Eckersall**, a timid rather easily bullied character but well meaning in his endeavour to enlarge his congregation. The three ladies involved in setting up the sale were **Eleanor Phillips** and Mary Meacher, Jane played by **Diana Robinson** and Phyllis a nurse played by **Jenny Crumpton**. I am sure many of the audience recognised the sort of characters who live in a small village and all played their parts well. **Helen Salisbury** was impressive as the director of the Treadeagle Players, overriding everyone in her desire to stage her play. **Peter Shaw** was great as Wing-Commander Drinkwater, a rather boring but randy old goat slapping one of the ladies on the bottom and propositioning another, completely oblivious to the views of the ladies and boring everyone with his military tales. **Diana Robinson** was Jane with **Nick Lansdowne** the scoutmaster as her love interest. Her description of the one-night stand was very amusing. **Trevor Pilling** and **Andrew Watsham** played the unsympathetic paramedics and **Torr Hiley** and **Callum Htchett** were the two naughty boy scouts. The scene was well played and I loved the way the customers crowded in and jostled the vicar and each other in their eagerness to buy the items, including the props inadvertently left by Collette in preparation for her production. The ending was a little abrupt but all became clear in the next play.

THE CAPTAIN'S TABLE – BLACK BARTRAM'S REVENGE

This was a Melodrama by the Treadeagle Players, very funny and completely O.T.T. The set was cleverly devised with a mast and ship's wheel effectively depicting the deck of the ship. The director, Colette Rutter superbly played by **Helen Salisbury** was responsible for a considerable amount of the humour. Her facial expressions and despair at the incompetence of her cast was a sight to behold. The vicar **Paul Eckersall** as Captain Redbeard was so ludicrous as to be amusing with his ginger beard. **Callum Hatchett** was excellent as the over dramatic Jack playing his role to perfection. **Martin Osborne** was convincing as the 'baddie' enabling the audience to hiss and boo. The sailors and pirates all played their parts successfully and the implements in place of the lost swords added to the humour. This was a lively interpretation and well received by the audience.

THE WEDDING RECEPTION

A trifle slow at the start it soon warmed up and then the shenanigans began. The usual bickering by the ladies preparing the wedding feast, and the rather bossy flower arranger getting on everyone's nerves. **Diana Robinson** was entertaining as the pregnant bride. She started to hit the bottle when the groom disappeared, got rather drunk and her performance was great and very funny, her colourful language only made the audience laugh more. **Jenny Crumpton** was a most elegant bridesmaid and her attire outshone that of the bride. **Torr Hiley** and **Callum Hatchett** were the mischievous boy scouts letting off stink bombs to liven up the proceedings. **Martin Osborne** almost stole the show as the ageing D.J. he was exceptional and the delighted audience showed their approval. The fall on the meringue elicited general laughter from the audience. All's well that ends well and the cast gave a lively conga at the end with the audience clapping along. A special mention should go to the residents of Basset-under-Stigwood for their participation in the crowd scenes.

SET DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION.

This was quite minimal with just tables and a clothes rack for the first play. The second on board the ship was inventive, well constructed offering the desired effect. The table for the Wedding Reception was beautifully decorated and transformed the stage. Those responsible were **Roger Miller, Peter Threadgold, Gwenda Hudson, Steve Cherry** and **Peter Larkham. Judith Watsham** and the cast organised the props. The set changes could have been quieter especially as there was not a great deal to them, but the changes came during the intervals so that much of the sound went unnoticed by the audience who were eating and drinking.

LIGHTING AND SOUND

There was very little in the way of lighting plots but Steve Cherry designed and I imagine operated the lighting very efficiently.

Charlie Carrington did a superb job on the sound. The breaking of crockery in the first act, Tony Savage as the voice of the ghost of Algernon was superb with a brilliant echo, and the sea storm on the Mary Belle was cleverly portrayed

THE PROGRAMME

Well designed by **Alan Crumpton** and **Will Templeton** with **Jenny Crumpton** dealing with the content. It was printed on glossy paper with a very fetching front cover. There was a mention for NODA. with the crest in the front right and corner. Inside was a message from **Trevor Pilling** the Chairman and **Judith Watsham** offered the Director's note together with rehearsal photographs by **Roger Miller** which is always of interest.. Before the second play we were given an additional programme by the Treadeagle Players for their Melodrama production with a superb pirate ship on the front cover.

IN CONCLUSION

Judith Watsham did a sterling job as director for both the first and the third plays. The 'play within a play' Black Bartram's Revenge was directed by Trevor Pilling not an easy task but very well done. I gather there were rehearsal problems with ill health and the dreadful weather we had earlier in the year, but the cast pulled together to offer an evening of laughter and good entertainment.

