

Black Comedy

A play by Peter Shaffer
Performed in May 1993

Good movers light up 'black' comedy

Faringdon Community Theatre player Dave Headey has had to work particularly hard to restore his real persona, after a larger-than-life characterisation as the limp-wristed Harold Gorringer, in Peter Shaffer's play, *Black Comedy*.

Dave and Deidre Hamley, playing the unfamiliarly-inebriated neighbour Miss Furnival, worked a wonderful double act to back up the leading parts taken with great skill by Nick Hobden, as the hapless victim of circumstance, Brindsley Miller, and Mary Green, as Carol Melkett, his yuppie betrothed.

But in this instance, particular credit must be also be paid to someone not on the stage, or even behind it - the lighting man, Tim Reeves. For this unusual production relies on a reverse-effect, where the audience sees everything that is going on when the lights of the set are apparently fused, but the cast acts as though in darkness. Timing and co-operation between actors and lighting man are, therefore, crucial. And they worked perfectly, as did the all-essential props, masterminded by Jeni Summerfield. Set construction, too, was superb, thanks to Alan and Carolyn Taylor, Irene and Walther Schoonenberg, Jo and Peter Webster and Carole and Jim Tappenden.

This situation comedy draws its laughs from stage movements as much as dialogue. And the producer, Carolyn Taylor, must be congratulated for choreographing her cast superbly. As they stumbled and fumbled around the set, all were both convincing and amusing.

Peter Webster did his best with the part of the crusty, ex-military blustering father, but the actor's own niceness prevented him, perhaps, from playing it quite as heavily as it deserved. And Debbie Lock floated decoratively, if a little tentatively, through what is admittedly rather an odd role - at the same time ghostly yet real, as Clea, the lost love returned. Walther Schoonenberg was happily typecast as the German-born electrician Schuppanzigh who is mistaken for an expected millionaire VIP, and Roger Leitch made a fleeting last-minute appearance as the real millionaire, Georg Bamberger.

All in all, an unusual play expertly produced and very entertaining.

I.S

Lights out for a black comedy

The Spring production on offer from Faringdon Community Theatre is to be 'Black Comedy' by Peter Schaffer, a playwright normally associated with full-blooded and sometimes harrowing dramas such as Amadeus, Equus and Royal Hunt of the Sun.

The Faringdon group was delighted to discover Schaffer's gift for comedy in this play, written and set in the late '60s. The action takes place during a power cut - hence the title - and the ensuing mayhem is fair more of a farce than a black comedy.

However, Schaffer cannot resist turning the screw on his characters just a little, and there is more than a hint of 'blackness' under the surface chaos of deception and mistaken identity.

"Faringdon Community Theatre", says the play's director, Carolyn Taylor, "hope to attract audience members who have not taken the plunge and come to see their performances before".

I.S

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