

Stepping out in triumph

It was brave of the Faringdon Community Theatre to have a go at Richard Harris's play, *Stepping Out* – particularly when Liza Minelli's film version is currently in the news. Not only did the valiant Faringdon thespians have to learn to tap-dance, but they also had to cope with a script that relies on characterisation rather than plot.

In the event, I think the cast can feel well pleased with themselves. Even they must have wondered whether it was all going to work on the night, for the rather banal situations, in an unchanging set, do not suggest exciting theatre.

The secret was that all the players managed to make the most of the very funny lines and eccentricities of character that hold the whole play together as a comedy. They must have been gratified, not to say relieved, at the genuine audience response which told them that all the hard work had been worthwhile.

Though one is left at the end of this play wondering why the developing interplay of characters does not lead somewhere more exciting, such a disappointing tail-off is down to Harris, not the actors. And one is left feeling a great warmth towards the whole cast who gave some talented individual performances: Carolyn Taylor as the most believable dance tutor, Deirdre Hamley, superb as the prickly pianist (whose little solo diversion with a tea tray in front of the closed curtains near the end was a treat), Jemima Headey as Lynne, Joan Lee as the rather dim Dorothy, Carole Tappenden as smarty-pants Maxine, Mary Green as the rather precious 'Andy', Peter Webster as the monosyllabic lone male, Jo Webster as the social-climbing busybody Vera, Debbie Lock as the hilariously tarty Sylvia, and Ruth Willett, whose Scots delivery as self-deprecating Rose made every line a winner.

Producer Brenda Keith-Walker must have been very pleased on the night. And everyone must have been grateful for the dance tutoring from Pam Matfield, of Wantage, which has brought a new skill into the theatre's repertoire. —J.S.



Top: Debbie Lock applies another dab of lipstick before joining fellow dance 'students' Mary Green, Joan Lee, Carole Tappenden and Ruth Willett. Above: the finale number. Left: Carolyn Taylor shows Peter Webster and Co. their steps

