

# Time and The Conways

A play by J.B.Priestley  
Performed in May 1990

## Women given plum roles in this play

It's a pleasure to watch a play that gives its strongest roles to female members of the cast. There aren't too many of them.

The first act of *Time and the Conways*, however, staged by Faringdon Community Association Dramatic Society, almost made one wonder about such chivalrous thoughts. For a play with a message, this one makes a terribly uncertain opening, demanding that the ladies launch from a cold start into the forced jollity of a dressing-up game of charades. The awkwardness of characters such as the oh-so-easy-going brother Alan Conway (who was also the director, Nick Hobden) and the pomposity of family solicitor Gerald Thornton (played by Alan Taylor) do little to help the ladies get over the clumsiness of this first act.

### **Time-warp**

The second, however, gives everyone an opportunity to really get their teeth into a typical Priestley scenario of time-warp, showing how badly wrong a family's fond hopes and simple ambitions can go over a 40-year-period. Good, solid stuff, memorable and emotive, in which all took much credit.

Brenda Keith-Walker, as Madge Conway, brought a particularly-startling change to her role with the onset of years, but all the Conway womenfolk - played by Helen Barter, Carolyn Taylor, Jo Webster and Carole Tappenden, gave us very

Dave Headey as Ernest Beevers, and Peter Webster as Robin Conway provided the unpredictable male influences in their lives. What a pity Carol Conway makes no appearance in the second act, for Debbie Lock's was the most promising character to come out of the uncertain first act, and in the third she was responsible for a powerful delivery of the most telling lines of the whole play.

### **One act too many**

Another problem with this play is that the third act, apart from Carol's speech, is almost superfluous, and for me rather spoils the message by dotting too many 'i's and crossing too many 't's that would be better left to the audience to assume.

Difficult for any cast to match the tension of the second act - particularly when interrupted by coffee and a raffle...

But the Community Players did their best, and still managed to leave a thoughtful audience pondering the truths of Blake's lines about the inevitable mix of joy and misery in all our lives.

I.S

convincing character-changes.

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