

Farringdon Community Theatre at the Oxon Drama Network Festival.

Production of ' Magic ' from " Visiting Hour " by Richard Harris.

Tuesday 6th. June 1995.

The Farringdon Community Theatre company chose a very difficult play as their offering for the Drama Festival. It deals with crass insensitivity and despite the comic writing it also underlines the small tragedies of everyday life.

Set during the visiting hour in a busy NHS hospital ward the play investigates the relationships between the patients and their visitors and is punctuated by a rather frantic conversation from one of the patients to her unfaithful boyfriend.

The simple, stark setting worked very well and despite being somewhat cramped still allowed the actors room to move. The costumes were all suitable for the characters and ranged from an over-the-top dressing gown ensemble for the hapless, tarty Sandra to a quite grotesque ball gown for Joan which graphically mirrored her upwardly mobile pretensions.

The company had made a deliberate decision to go for stereotypes and exploited them to the full. The play was very well paced and contained many changes of mood which contrasted with the almost farcical elements which the play contains. Both the audience and the cast enjoyed themselves immensely which helped to create an exciting, theatrical atmosphere at the Unicorn.

May, the rather sad old lady in the middle bed, was played with great sensitivity and remained in character all the way through. Some of her rather naive, throw-away lines were handled with great skill and ensured that she won the sympathy of the audience.

Arthur, her husband, who bore a remarkable resemblance to Norman Wisdom also gave a very skilled performance. His timing was always spot-on and he managed to wring every ounce of comedy out of his lines.

Sandra, with the boyfriend trouble, was loud, coarse and brash. Her telephone conversation was so realistic that you could almost visualise the rather unpleasant ' gentleman ' who was on the other end of the line.

Poor Brenda, the lonely spinster in hospital with ' internal ' trouble, was repressed and totally overwhelmed by everything going on around her. She proved to be an excellent foil to the activities of her two visitors.

Joan, the wonderful snob who was just popping in on her way to the work's dance was the sort of person you wanted to slap every time she opened her mouth. She was condescending and arrogant all the time and managed to depress everyone around her. A very well controlled performance.

Ron, unfortunately married to Joan was ineffectual, hen pecked and hamfisted. His inept attempts at conjuring, a skill he has no doubt developed to escape from the attentions of Joan, were a delight to watch and must have taken hours to perfect. His lack of skill was positively embarrassing.

This was production presented by a talented company who deserve support from the local community. They were confident on stage, understood the skills of presentation and are obviously dedicated to providing first class entertainment for their audiences. Long may they continue!

Russell Whiteley. DDA. ADB. ALCM. GODA.

Adjudicator.

Cast.

May..... *Deirdre Hawley*.....
Arthur..... *Dave Headey*.....
Sandra..... *Lucy Walden*.....
Brenda..... *Joan Lee*.....
Joan..... *Jo webster*.....
Ron..... *Peter webster*.....

Director *Debbie Lock*