

Faringdon Folly

'The Cherry Orchard' by Anton Chekhov

The curtain rose in the school hall of Faringdon's Junior School to a beautifully crafted set, which immediately took the audience back to a May morning on Madam Ranevskays's estate in early nineteenth century Russia. The set was beautifully designed and built by Jo Webster and the set construction team, which set the whole scene for a wonderful evening's entertainment.

The cast all gave very convincing performances. The whole play had a wonderfully light and gentle feel to it; the Director, John Taylor and his Assistant Director, Rachel Coward should be very proud of this production. They had obviously spent a lot of time researching this play and the audience were delighted with the final production.

Daniel Lander, gave a vibrant portrayal of Lopakhin, the merchant, catching the ambiguity in his character. He moved around the stage with such authority, energy and professionalism. As usual Carolyn Taylor, the excessively complicated Madame Ranevskaya, held the audience in the palm of her hand with her wonderful acting and stage presence - quite perfect. Peter Webster played the part of Gaev, Ranevskaya's clumsy brother, with great sensitivity and gentle humour. Varya, Ranevskaya's adopted daughter, played by Sandra Keen had a voice like a bell and was perfectly cast as the controlling daughter. Laura Coleman gave an attractive performance as the idealistic, innocent Anya, Ranevskaya's daughter. Jeff Barry, played the part of Simeonov-Pishchik with just the right amount of pomposity.

The part of Dunyasha, the maid, was played by Karen Whiffen, who delivered just the right amount of humour. Charlotta, the Governess, was charmingly played by Katie Dyet and with her striking looks and wonderful accent, (real I believe) lent a certain charm to the production. Adrian Wells was very well cast as the philosophical Trofimov, a student. He could have stepped right out of the Russian history books.

The part of the pretentious rude manservant, Yasha and the funny estate clerk, Yepikhodov, were ably played by Gary Field and Dominic Bullock. The minor parts were played by: Alan Taylor, the Tramp and Stationmaster; the Servants were played by Tim and Nick Evans.

The show was stolen by Dave Headey who played the old retainer, Firs. Everything down to his 87 year old walk and his mumbling conversations to no-one in particular was perfect. He caught the whole theme of the play, portraying beautifully the dying embers of the Russian aristocracy and the death of the old class system. Last but not least was Poppy, the dog, who behaved with true canine professionalism.

This was an impressively professional play on all fronts. The lighting, atmospheric music and dancing was very effective and the costumes beautifully put together. A lot of effort was made in covering every small detail and congratulations to Katie Dyet for her little magic tricks. Yet again, well done FDS

by Michelle Addison

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