

Oxfordshire Drama Network

ODN Review

FARINGDON DRAMATIC SOCIETY presents

I THOUGHT I HEARD A RUSTLING By Alan Plater

The front of house team at Faringdon (this time led by Denise Monk) are always welcoming and pleasant, such a nice start to an evening – I did not know this play and was pleased to read a short synopsis in the programme which did not tell me the ending but made me want to find out more.

Ex-miner turned poet Bill Robson (Daniel Lander) has been appointed, under false pretences, writer – in – residence to a small branch Library- Daniel sustained a believable 'geordie' accent throughout and we understood every word! He's a 'Walter Mitty' who was neither a miner or a poet, or an ex-criminal but Daniel had us, (and the Library committee) believing he was all of these things. '(There's nothing I don't know about computers – I used to play Space Invaders in the Miner's Arms)'

Senior Librarian Ellen Scott (Joan Lee) sees through Bill but likes him anyway and they strive together, by underhand means, to save the Library from demolition. As always, a nicely judged, intelligent performance from Joan.

Cllr Graham (Sandra Keen) was 'nicely' in charge and suitably patronising to everyone she spoke to. Lovely diction.

Gerald Nutley (Allan Dover) an aspiring writer of little talent but an exhausting handshake joins Bill and Ellen in their efforts to keep his beloved Library going. Very convincingly played by Alan, he made us feel that the Library (and its' books) was his refuge.

Bernard (Jonathan Keen) was a council employee who seemed to be solely employed for measuring - anything - rooms, notice boards, doors, and to this end I felt he would have been more familiar with a tape measure – however he looked and sounded right and gave a believable performance.

I felt that the costumes (Jeni Summerfield) were just right and the sets (Jeff Barry, Gary Field, Peter Webster) took us right into Ellen's office in that small branch Library. Although would Ellen have had it quite so untidy? And the 2 green files stayed on the desk for 5 weeks. I loved the boiling kettle.

The play was sympathetically directed by Gary Field, obviously using his experience as an actor to help his players give thoughtful performances and to get the best out of Alan Plater's gently funny script. I thought the mix of music styles a bit confusing, I think there was meant to be music during the first scene change, which sounded rather noisy. Conversely I loved the use of the Rodriguez Concerto to follow up Gerald's attempted trilogy on the Spanish poet and dramatist Federico Lorca and of course 'When the Boat comes In' for our Geordie

It was brave of Faringdon to choose a relatively unknown play, not an obvious crowd-puller, but one which the audience enjoyed immensely.

Deidre Jones