

**Faringdon Dramatic Society presented Present Laughter by Noel Coward
Oct 2012**

Nice forties music as the curtains opened to a sumptuous set designed by Jo Webster, all art deco lines and period furniture. Janie Eyre-Brook played the secretary of many years with efficiency and care, completely believable. Jayne Isham played Daphne, a would-be starlet, all innocence and ambition. We're told in the programme notes that Noel Coward wrote this play as a vehicle for himself - in the role of Garry Essendine. Peter McGurk was less convincing as Garry Essendine - not languorous or vain enough - I would have liked to see him throw himself onto the sofa and be much more 'over the top'. I didn't really believe him to be a ladies man, however the part is a tour de force, so many lines to learn and Peter delivered them all with strength and conviction.

Amanda Linstead as the ex-wife was crisp and assured in her delivery, a convincing performance, she never came out of character, acting all the time. Simon Porter was funny as the anguished author. His carefully considered movements made for a very watchable performance. I felt that Richard Lock and John Sudworth as the business partners were a little underplayed - I'm thinking of Lew Grade in that era, with his cigars and his fur coat thrown over his shoulders. - a bit of a swagger needed. Karen Irving as the seductive cheating wife had a lovely 40s feel to her delivery and walk - helped I'm sure by the beautiful flowing bias cut dress. I'm always happy to see Joan Lee and Carolyn Taylor in the programme and they did not disappoint with their characters of cigarette drooping maid and Lady Saltburn respectively. Austen Roberts played valet Fred with a jaunty air but I did think whistling 'Magic Moments' was rather out of period, more 50s than 40s I think. Yes I know I'm being really picky.

Wardrobe was by Jeni Summerfield, Lynda Bates and Joan Lee and the ladies' 40s suits complete with seamed stockings and lovely hats were a delight. However I did think that Gary Essendine would perhaps have had a velvet smoking jacket at some time to soften the suits and I'm sure he would have had slippers in Act 1. And I don't think the ladies would have worn tights under their pyjamas - probably worn to facilitate a quick change.

Once again Faringdon Dramatic Society, this time under Director Jeff Barry, have presented a highly entertaining evening as the warm appreciation of the audience showed.

Deidre Jones