

Faringdon Folly

Lend me a tenor: Garrison theatre company from Canada seeks exchange with similar English company. Likes travel. Good sense of humour essential.

The play, a farce about an opera singer, but with no singing, was brought to Faringdon by the Garrison Little Theatre Company for two performances in late September at the Junior School. This was the first exchange visit between the Fort Erie, Ontario company and the Faringdon Dramatic Society. They found each other through an internet search on the part of the Canadians to connect with a similar theatre group in England. Consequently a party of 12 arrived a week before, eight of them in the cast of Ken Ludwig's 'Lend me a tenor'. It's a well-known play, performed around the world, but adapted on this occasion to a contemporary Toronto setting. The chief character is Italian opera star Tito Morelli, 'Il Stupendo', who arrives just in time for a one-off sell-out performance in the city. A host of coincidences, misunderstandings, double entendres and innuendoes abound through the two acts leading towards a farcical ending. The opera star, played by Chuck Jagiello, overdoses on tranquilizers, is taken for dead and in an attempt to cover up, his understudy and company gopher, Max, played by Vince Marinaccio, takes his place. He sings a blinder and fools the whole world, apparently. He was excellent and reminded me of Gene Wilder, in his role in the original film of "The Producers". It helps that Signor Morelli has brought two sets of identical costumes and that he was playing Othello, and on waking up gets dressed for the part and is refused admission to the theatre as an impostor. The whole scenario begins to unravel and reaches a climax when both Othellos are on stage at the same time, identically dressed. Strong performances from the rest of the cast, including Saunders, the general manager, played by Derek Joynes, (who also happens to be a founder member and chairman of Garrison), Maria Morelli (Maxine Simons) and Diana (Joyce Stark). The show was directed by Darka Makarec, with assistance and technical support by James Reid. The set was built by the FDS crew. Both performances were well attended and there is no doubt that the audience thoroughly enjoyed the show, They rolled with the jokes and sat in anticipation of the next one coming along. The company returned to Fort Erie to perform the play in their home town. The Canadian visitors also took the opportunity to get in some sightseeing in Oxford, London, the Folly tower and elsewhere and were the special guests at a reception held for them by FDS at the Old Town Hall. They were put up by members of the theatre company and adopted the Red Lion as their local for the week. The plan is for FDS to take the Richard Harris play 'Outside Edge' to Ontario next May and perform it in the usual venue of Garrison - the Italian-Canadian Club in downtown Fort Erie. It's a play about cricket, that should baffle them. In the meantime FDS are looking forward to putting on their annual pantomime at the end of January, they are reviving Peter Panto, last seen in 1995 and adapted from the J.M.Barrie story by FDS member Peter Webster.

Al Cane Faringdon Folly November 2007