



National Operatic & Dramatic Association

London Area Report

My thanks again to RACHEL and Director JOHN TAYLOR for the invitation to review your latest production. As mentioned in your Programme, we had a foretaste of Shakespeare last year when you performed your 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare'- of which 'Much Ado About Nothing' was part of the programme. I enjoyed that evening, and I certainly enjoyed the 2003 production. Whoever came up with the idea, it was an excellent one, and to decide on an 'outdoor' production was very brave, considering the British weather... However, the gods were on your side this time, except perhaps for the wind- this was an extra prop...

The setting for the show was first class, and the use of the tree as part of the set worked well. I liked JO WEBSTER's SET - simple but very effective - the crimson colour blended in so well with the green background of the trees when the lights came on. It looked fantastic. Well done.

The MUSICIANS of DOWNWIND were unobtrusive, dressed for the occasion, and blended in well with the play. Congratulations to you all.

DIRECTOR - JOHN TAYLOR; who must be a very busy man - as Chairman of your Society also, had I'm sure, as the end result showed, put a lot of thought into this production. I am sure he had been assisted 100% by the other talent-ASSISTANT DIRECTOR- DEBBIE LOCK. I'm sure many ideas for this production had come from both of you.

The DANCES arranged by CAROLYN TAYLOR fitted the period, and were well executed; not easy to do - with the time lapse between musicians, and where you were performing, and working on grass. Congratulations to you all.

This was a large cast, but time and space does not permit me to make comments on everyone. For that I apologise, and I hope you will forgive me! I must say that EVERYONE in the cast worked extremely hard, you all gave of your best. The diction was good, at least from where I sat. (Front row). However I think it would have been just as good further back; because you all took your time to speak with clarity - it was not too slow; (the performance never became slow and boring. Also it was noticeable that the cast were not put off by the nearness to their audience, some of you are experienced enough for this not to happen-but nevertheless it can be off-putting. I was impressed by the speed with which the actors picked up on cues, especially as performing outdoors is not always easy to hear what is going on the other side of the flats.

Many people had enjoyed their picnics, and then we had a fantastic start to the show - how the THREE WATCHMEN lifted the opening - I'm sure they had enjoyed rehearsing - were they hand picked?... Brilliant all round, from facial expressions to actions, especially the nasty cough... Were DEBBIE, SARAH and JENI new to such roles... I think not! Well done.

LEONATO, Governor of Messina - DAVE HEADEY.

Was 'at home' with the character, congratulations on growing your beard, it looked fabulous. Good eye contact with everyone, and the character was well understood. You did have a pre-run in the part last year. Well done.

HERO, Leonato's daughter - ANNABEL HOLDSWORTHY.

Looked just right. Beautiful complexion and sparkling eyes. Very mature for one so young, and was in total control of her character throughout. Well done. I'm sure you'll make the grade into Drama School, and I wish you every success in the future.

BEATRICE, Leonato's niece - RACHEL COWARD.

Looked elegant on stage, carried herself with dignity and spoke clearly, with feeling. Costume looked good, but I was slightly puzzled; should the arms have been in those sleeves, or was it to be as a form of cape? Rachel had looked into the depth of the character, and played the part well.

DON PEDRO, Prince of Arragon - SIMON WISBEY.

Simon gave us a foretaste of this character last year. An experienced actor, who knew when to 'pull out the stops'. He was in total control, and looked good with his own beard. Well done.

CLAUDIO - ADRIAN WELLS and BENEDICK - GARY THOMPSON.

These two characters as companions of the prince had rather a lot to say to each other, and were on stage together quite a lot. The dialogue flowed well between them, facial expressions were good, and I liked Benedick's reactions from 'behind' the tree. I liked Gary's real beard. I was rather confused as to why Claudio was wearing tan shoes, when everyone else had black shoes? To me it did not look correct - sorry.

BALTHASAR, a singer - ALLYN RICHARDSON.

Looked good, in command of his role, and sang his two difficult songs well. Congratulations on the arrangements of them. I'm sure I saw him in Wantage a few weeks ago.

DON JOHN, Don Pedro's brother - CLEEVE FORTY.

Looked good on stage, excellent diction and body language. Was seen as Claudio last year. Well done.

BORACHIO - PETER WEBSTER.

How fortunate to have a person who is equally 'at home' on stage, or behind the scenes. Spoke well, and was in full command of his character.

MARGARET, attendant on Hero - MARY MOUNTFORD-LISTER. Did all that was asked of her looking after Hero, very attentive, to the last detail.

FRIAR FRANCIS - NICK TYNDALL.

He may feel at home in Faringdon Market Place on Boxing day; however, he would not be out of work - as a priest.. Very sincere in all he did and I liked the way he conducted the wedding scene. Well done.

URSULA - SARAH COUZENS.

Was 'full' of her character, excellent facial expressions, good clear diction, and was full of confidence in her role.

DOGBERRY, Constable in charge of the watch - DENIS PEACH.

This was NO ASS... Excellent performance throughout. (I'm not sure that all the words were in the script... Very much-'alive' on stage, and the audience were behind him throughout. I'm sure he could be heard in Faringdon Market Place. Congratulations.

COSTUMES.

These were designed by JENI SUMMERFIELD. A lady with exceptional talent. The colours

blended in well with the set, background, and when lit up - they looked spectacular. Congratulations to YOU, JOAN LEE, and YOUR TEAM of SEAMSTRESSES. MASKS by JENI SUMMERFIELD, JOAN LEE and MARY MOUNTFORD-LISTER. These looked fantastic in the dance, they lifted the show at that point.

LIGHTING - IAN CHANDLER.

This was just right for the surroundings. Good use of filters. Well done.

SOUND - GARY BATES.

Did a first class job, especially as the main principals were not 'miked' up.

FRONT OF HOUSE.

DENISE MONK, ANN TAYLOR, and the team, looked the part in their costumes. These are the FIRST PEOPLE that the audience meet, and sets the tone for the evening.

EVERYONE in the PRODUCTION TEAM and others OUTSIDE helped to make this a memorable evening, which I'm sure everyone enjoyed.

DIRECTOR - JOHN TAYLOR can feel proud of producing such a fine evening's entertainment to a knowledgeable audience, who appreciated what was being done in the Faringdon Community in aid of the British Heart Foundation, who you were supporting.

Thank you, and I look forward to your next production.

GARETH JEREMY. REGION 12.

NODA LONDON For Services to Amateur Theatre