



A performance of great spirit

The ladies stole the show with mistressly performances when Faringdon Community Theatre fell back on one of the amateur stage's tried-and-tested old faithfuls, Noel Coward's 'Blithe Spirit'.

Faringdon is very lucky indeed to have individual talents such as those displayed by Helen Barter, Carolyn Taylor, Jo Webster and Beryl Rees. One looks ahead with trepidation to the uncertain financial future for Faringdon Community Centre, and thus its theatre — surely Faringdon cannot let this rare example of excellence slip through its fingers?

And it is not simply the acting, but the professionalism of the whole package — set design, costumes, lighting — that adds up to a theatre company which should be the envy of the Vale.

'Blithe Spirit' was a delight. Helen Barter's performance as Ruth Condomine, scorned by the ghostly spirit of her husband's former wife, was remarkable in its totality — voice, mannerisms, body language, deportment, were all perfectly in character. I don't think she put a foot, and certainly not a word, wrong.

Beryl Rees, a relative newcomer, but one of obvious experience, overplayed the part of Madame Arcarti the medium, drawing out every ounce of theatricality from the part.

Peter Webster played his role as the beleaguered Charles Condomine with great soundness

and consistency — but he sometimes lacked the forcefulness to adequately balance the richness of the female contribution.

Carolyn Taylor used her dance skills to glide delightfully around the stage as Elvira, the spirit itself, blending grace and humour in a charming portrayal.

Jo Webster brought as much life as is possible to the rather incidental role of Mrs Bradman, while Roger Leitch struggled to overcome an even bigger challenge with her staid and stodgy husband, Dr Bradman.

Sarah Nutbrown brought great enthusiasm and stage-presence to her role as the maid, Edith — and we look forward to seeing more of her in future productions, as her approach to accurate characterisation matures.

Carole Tappenden, taking a break from the stage to direct this production, is to be congratulated on the way she choreographed the characters to maintain constant interest despite the handicap of an unchanging set. The pace did not flag.

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● Pictured above: Madame Arcarti (Beryl Rees) is tended by Charles Condomine (Peter Webster) Mrs Bradman (Jo Webster) and Dr Bradman (Roger Leitch), watched by Ruth Condomine (Helen Barter). Right: Charles and the spirit of his former wife, Elvira (Carolyn Taylor)

