



Be inspired by amateur theatre

Society : Faringdon Dramatic Society
Production : Cider with Rosie
Date : 9th November 2017
Venue : Faringdon Junior School
Report by : Rob Bertwistle

Show Report

Thank you very much for the kind invitation to review Faringdon Dramatic Society's latest production - *Cider with Rosie*.

This was a charming and thought provoking production involving all ages and it was so nice to see youngsters having such an active and positive part in the proceedings. The adult cast members were all very good however some of the younger cast gave some memorable performances also. The autobiographical story of author Laurie Lee's childhood and youth was brought vividly to life in this production which was the perfect antidote for a chilly November evening!

The Production:

This was an ambitious and well-constructed production done in the round with all the advantages and pitfalls this method of staging can create. Played in the round can involve an audience more and this can be an exciting concept however, here, some of the lines were lost when characters were facing in the other direction. I discussed this with Debbie the director and we agreed that just encouraging and fostering good diction and projection can be the key to solving this particular problem.

Principals:

Dave Headey was outstanding as The Narrator the now grown up Laurie. He commanded the stage and moved in and out of the action with a touching warmth as he watched his formative years being played out before him. He had so many lines too and never faltered in the delivery and pace. His diction and projection was very good and only on a couple of occasions when he was facing away did I struggle to hear the dialogue. Well done!

Sarah Varnom shone too as Laurie's eccentric and slightly dotty mother. A mesmerising performance with great use of the stage and some wonderful facial expressions. Her love for her 'brood' was well captured. Excellent diction rounded off a first class portrayal.

Leo Thrower was convincing as the teenage Laurie with a confident and at times touching portrayal. I really liked the cider scene with Rosie. Diction and projection were also very good.

Laurie Lane as the childhood Laurie gave an excellent and very confident performance for a nine year old *and* he was making his stage debut! This is a young man to watch out for! Congratulations on your performance.

Heather Stone as Doth, Alison Morris as Marge and Millie Long as Phyll – Laurie’s playful and delightful sisters were played beautifully by the three actresses. They worked so well together and the interaction between them was a joy to watch. All spoke clearly and delivered their lines with aplomb! Well done to all of you!

Laurie’s brothers were portrayed well by a confident Josh Dunn as Jack and the convincing Finlay Brand as Tony. Again the interaction between the brothers and the rest of the ‘family’ was totally convincing and their diction and use of the stage was always good.

Kia Howard was touchingly effective as Rosie. She gave a mature and beautifully simple portrayal of the character. This was certainly a long way from playing a ‘rose’! Very well done!

Supporting Cast:

There were numerous other characters played by the excellent supporting cast members including some FDS veterans - Sandra Keen, Joan Lee, Carolyn Taylor, Gary Field, Jo Webster and Jeni Somerfield to name a few – who all gave strong and believable performances. In fact there wasn’t a weak link in the entire cast. The children, Lauren Elvidge, Skye Rundall Farquhar, Cecily Roberts and Samantha Viner all really did well and were obviously having a great time as they skipped and danced through the scenes.

The exquisite and atmospheric violin interludes provided by Jon Lane were the perfect finishing touches to this wonderful production.

Director:

Director Debbie Lock did a fine job with her talented cast. The action moved along at a cracking pace and the scenes flowed seamlessly aided by some very nifty scene changes carried out by a well-rehearsed cast. There were some delightful moments and the cast certainly did her proud in their characterisations and portrayals. The accents were well-maintained throughout. Congratulations!

Sound and Lighting:

The sound and lighting plot by Ian Chandler, Gary Bates and Steve Greening really was special. The sound effects were terrific and the lighting brought great atmosphere to the play. The effects of ‘candles’ being lit by gradually introducing more light was particularly effective. Well done gentlemen!

Set Design:

The simple set designed and constructed by Jeff Barry, Peter Webster, Alan Merrick and Jo Webster served the players well transforming into many different locations and settings with ingenious simplicity. I really liked the creation of amazing scenes like a carousel (brilliantly executed) and the imaginary charabanc.

Props:

Props were used well and looked very much in keeping with the 'rustic' feel of the piece.

Costumes:

Wardrobe by Jenni Summerfield, Joan Lee and Lynda Bates perfectly complimented the style and setting of the production and everyone looked splendid in their various costumes.

Programme:

Dave Headey's Programme was quite brief but contained some interesting cast biographies and some lovely colour shots of the cast and rehearsals by Paul Mountford-Lister and Anna Marlow.

Front of House:

I received my usual warm welcome from the Front of House team headed by Katie Dyet and Denise Monk and unusually the costumed cast – a nice touch.

In conclusion I would like to thank everyone both on and off the stage for providing such an excellent and enjoyable evening's entertainment. I'm sure the applause of the appreciative audience and very positive comments I overheard following the performance were reward enough for all your efforts.

I look forward to seeing you all again soon.

Best wishes,

Rob

Rob Bertwistle

Regional Representative

District 12

NODA London