

Based on the novel *The Enchanted April* by Elizabeth Bon Arnim, Faringdon Dramatic Society's latest production was certainly a captivating affair. Focused on the character of Charlotte, a well-behaved, well-to-do society wife, the story explores the themes of rediscovering joy after sadness, the importance of acceptance and the unquestionable need to be absolutely true to ourselves. With some well-played funny lines, particularly from the character of Costanza, played brilliantly by Sue Ashford-Smith, and some equally serious moments between the main characters, the show was a roaring success.



Staged at the beautiful small theatre at Buscot House, the thoughtful and well-designed set made great use of the limited space, and clever and evocative lighting and music helped to create a fitting ambiance for each scene. The costumes were beautifully made and impressively authentic to the period, with the character of Lady Caroline (played very graciously by Lu Waywell) donning some particularly stunning gowns and footwear (I want those green shoes!).

Unfamiliar with the original story, we were not sure what to expect from the evening but the production was very sensitivity directed by Carolyn Taylor, with some really touching and heart warming scenes played out between husband and wife. The quality of the acting from Bex Hutchings and Amanda Linstead was particularly impressive and really captured the mood of the story, as well as the feelings of many women in the post-WWI era.

Debbie Lock made a very convincing grumpy Mrs Graves, while the characters of Mellersh and Frederick, played by Duncan Sinclair and Mike Fraser, were very believable in their roles as clueless husbands. Jonny Waywell was a very charming Wilding, managing to break through the defences of even the cold-hearted Mrs Graves.

The audience were spellbound throughout the performance as the characters experienced epiphanies, self-discovery and moments of clarity and emerged reborn, all within the magical setting of a wisteria-covered Italian castle bathed in sunshine.

It was a truly wonderful evening, with the enchanting grounds of Buscot House a very fitting setting for a well-crafted and touching story from the period. As always, the entire experience with the society was a real treat.

The group's commitment and devotion to their productions is clear, with small touches and careful thought going into every show, from the staging to the costumes and the acting to the atmosphere. It's no wonder that the Society have recently been awarded The NODA London Innovation Award for an element of a production which is different, challenging or innovative, for their production of *The Ruby Slippers*. How very well-deserved!

For more information about Faringdon Dramatic Society (FDS) shows or to get involved, see their website: www.faringdondramatic.org.uk. FDS's next production will be *A Night At the Musicals* at the Corn Exchange on 28th September.



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