

Oxfordshire Drama Network

ODN Review

Noises Off by Michael Frayn

Faringdon were as welcoming as ever to everyone who came to see their wonderful production of Noises Off at Faringdon Junior School. This very complex and funny show was performed and staged brilliantly by the team. You are very lucky that the school allows such work to be built on the stage; it must have taken a lot of thought and building to produce such a set. Well done to Tim Evans and the team.

This play opens with a theatrical company in the throws of the final rehearsal. It is immediately obvious that not all aspects of the play are ready for an audience!! We start to learn about various "relationships" which are going on backstage and personalities, during the many breaks in the rehearsal. The actors started a little slowly and seemed uncertain of their lines and pace suffered, but it did not last long and soon they were in the swing of the show. The second Act was great and showed us the same play being performed but from backstage, almost in mime except for the performance lines on stage. Then finally we see the show the right way around again and the relationships have deteriorated to catty, vicious and total chaos for the final scene.

Dotty (Leslie Phillips) started the play and was joined by Lloyd (Daniel Lander) who played the long suffering Director. Daniel's performance was very strong and the stage came to life when ever he was on. I must admit I would have liked to have seen him "in front" of me when he was shouting instructions at the cast (but off stage, standing on the steps, maybe) but that is purely my niggle as I have a bad back and hate turning around!! Also, I would have liked to see Lodd's underwear (some silk or garish boxers) when Dotty took out the cactus prickles...would have been funnier. (no comments please!!) Dotty was very good but I do think she should have had a skirt or petticoat, or even bloomers under her apron as it was very thin and too short.

Garry Lejeune (Jeff Barry) and Brooke Ashton (Alex Oliver) came on to show what a naughty Estate Agent does with clients when house owners are supposed to be out of the country!! Very energetic performance and good casting here. Shoes were quite noisy on the boards at times but it probably can't be helped when a character has to wear heels for the character. Garry's fall was very spectacular and well deserved his round of applause. Brooke was "lovely and dim," very well done. The contact lens scenes were brilliant.

Poppy (Debbie Lock) was suitably vague and played her part really well all the way through: a convincing performance of the poor down-trodden backstage girl who finds herself pregnant by the Director. Poor Tim Allgood (Rob Thorpe) was good as the Stage Manager who ran around here and there, sorting out problems and trying to do his best...but not always getting there! This was a good pairing too and the only hitch once or twice was the microphone not coming on every time. Not sure if this was governed by the actors or the control desk?

Frederick Fellowes (Simon Wisbey) and Belinda Blair (Sarah Vernon) were another breath of fresh air and a lovely contrast to the others. The grocery box which was carried was very light, not proper "groceries" in it. It hardly made a sound when it was dropped. They continued through the first act totally unaware there was anyone else around and always looked surprised when something went wrong. Freddie could have made more of the searching of "Dotty's clothes" but otherwise added to the second Act's rhythm and pace very well"

Selsdon (Roger Leitch) was really fit for the part, suitably vague and absent minded. His cues were a bit slow but he had a lovely speaking voice and his drinking habits caused a lot of hilarious situations from the rest of the cast, which added to the plot of the play.

The audience could see the people passing the downstairs bathroom door when it was open, a bit of masking would have helped there. Also, in the last scene there was so much going on and the audience was enjoying the play so much, all around me were creased up, that some of the funny lines were lost. Especially the one about "they always come in 3s, don't they?"

This was a very funny and extremely well presented play. The lighting was very effective considering it was a large area (just a black spot in the top stage left corner in Act 2 whenever Gary came through the door his wonderful facial expressions were almost lost.)

The costumes were very appropriate and fitted the play very well. Also, the make up was "invisible" which means it was perfect! The 2 programmes were fun and amusing to read whilst waiting, someone had put a lot of thought into them.

Thank you Faringdon for a lovely and entertaining evening. I love this play and you have only enhanced the reasons why I do, and shall continue to go and see it again and again. Well done and lots of "broken legs" for the forthcoming Panto.

Susi Dalton