



Society : FARINGDON DRAMATIC SOCIETY.
Production : SEPARATE TABLES - Two plays by Terence Rattigan.
Date : 8th November 2003.
Venue : FARINGDON JUNIOR SCHOOL.
Report by : GARETH JEREMY. REGION 12.

Report

Thankyou for the invitation to your latest production, presented at Faringdon Junior School. I was greeted by your Chairman, John, who immediately informed me that you had different chairs!!- and they were comfortable - thankyou; if you had not provided this facility, then I'm sure it would have reflected on the size of your audiences at the next production. One needs a certain comfort in a three hour production!.

One was faced by an excellent box set, designed by Jo Webster, and constructed by a dedicated 'Back Stage'Crew. I liked the extension for the lounge, however, I think the furniture could have been arranged a little differently, e.g.I would like to have seen the settee, at more of an angle to the audience, and not facing across the stage, to the opposite wall, I'll explain why later. This is no criticism of the set. I believe that in the 50's everything would be hung from the picture rail. There was no sign of this, was the picture rail just stuck on?

In the first half of the evening we experienced the play - 'Table By The Window'- a play set in the 1950's and takes place in the Beauregard Private Hotel, Bournemouth, during the winter. The play centred around a 24hour period, in a dining room during dinnertime, in the lounge after dinner and back to dining room the following morning.

The cast of eleven, worked very well together, but I had some misgivings- unfortunately, for me the pace of the play was far too slow, and some of dialogue was monotonous, some characters showed very little light and shade.

I think that sometimes it is worth a director sitting their cast in a circle, and going through the dialogue of a scene as quickly as possible, without losing the importance of what is being said. I believe if this technique had been used, we could have shortened the time of the plays by ten minutes, at least.

The Cast.

Debbie Lock - Mabel. An experienced actress, who played one of the maids. Excellent characteristics- (must be getting near to retirement!)- gave the audience something to smile/laugh about, good clear diction. However - one golden rule - the character must be kept until after the final curtain; what happened, after the final curtain call? Debbie walked straight off the stage- and we lost that wonderful mannerism that had been created throughout the play; that to me was a big disappointment, after working so well throughout the play.

Joan Lee - Lady Matheson. Excellent facial expressions, good diction, and plenty of light and shade in the character. I liked the way she revealed the details from the newspaper, regarding the Major. Well done.

Debra Keasal - Mrs.Railton-Bell. Worked hard, and got into her character. There were times when I felt a little more emotion could have been shown, towards her 'sheltered' daughter in the second play. More light and shade in the voice could also have helped, as there was so much to learn.



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Karen Whiffen - Miss Meacham. Well played, kept the character throughout. Good clear diction, and was well received by the audience. I hope her leg is now better.

Lauren Anderson - Doreen. The maid - quite a contrast to Mabel- she was 'the breath of fresh air' to the establishment. Good diction, and seemed to have enjoyed playing the role. Well done.

Lesley Phillips - Miss Cooper. Proprietor of the hotel - looked good on stage, was in charge of her hotel, and showed the emotion required towards Mr.Malcolm when his ex-wife appeared on the scene. Well done.

Wayne Jones - Mr.Malcolm. With the distance between him and his first wife in the dining room being so great, we needed the script to move at a much faster pace, as a journalist I would have expected more dynamism in the character. His feeling towards Miss Cooper came over well. Diction was good.

Frank Callanan - Mr.Fowler. Came over as an inept character, worried about his friend. At times his diction dropped away, and it was difficult to understand what he was saying. Needed more 'fire' in his belly.

Sally Edgington - Mrs.Shankland. Looked good on stage, excellent diction, and her character came over well. Good eye contact with her fellow actors.

Daniel Lander - Mr.Stratton.

Claire Stehle - Miss Tanner/Mrs.Stratton.

Worked well opposite each other,- Mr.Stratton must have found it difficult to study, with all the disturbances in his life. Good diction and facial expressions.

As mentioned earlier, with the position of the settee in the lounge, it was difficult to hear what Mrs.Stratton was saying, from where I sat, as her voice went straight across the stage; if the settee had been at more of an angle, the voice would have come out directly to the audience; apart from that they worked well as a husband and wife partnership.

After the interval, we met two additional characters at 'Table number Seven'.

David Field - Major Pollock. I expected more of 'a typical major' character- maybe a little over the top- large bushy moustache, rather a reddish complexion - due to the time spent at the Officer's Mess, and then the contrast to everyone finding out about his problems. I didn't feel he got inside his character enough, or perhaps he was told to play it the way he did. It's not the way I've seen it played previously.

Katie Dyet - Miss Railton-Bell. First class performance - really got into her character, excellent facial and body movements and her 'dominance' by her mother was well executed. Well done.