

A REVIEW OF A SERIES OF 1-ACT PLAYS
PRESENTED BY THE BEAUFORT PLAYERS

‘TWISTED LOVE’ (Erica & Me / Waiting / Thinking Aloud / With All My Love I Hate You!)

The growing strength and confidence of the Beaufort Players was amply displayed on 26th, 27th and 28th April 2007 when they presented four short plays (three per performance) on the theme of ‘Twisted Love’, including two written by their own members.

One of these, ‘Erica And Me’ by Alan Robinson, who also directed it, had already won the Best Original Play award at this year’s Chalfont Drama Festival. A lonely young executive, having invited his boss and wife to dinner, hires a “girlfriend” for the evening to impress them. But he fails to realise that the woman who arrives is instead a flat-hunting foreign student who speaks little English. She is followed in turn by two deliciously tarty escorts and then a predatory neighbour. The resulting chaos, cleverly choreographed, provided plenty of laughs. All the cast kept up a cracking pace throughout, though Chris Sinclair as the executive was sometimes a little too panic-stricken to be totally audible. Matt Tylianakis, the boss, and Jayne Bowman, one of the escorts, were particularly convincing. The producer was Krystyna Kobiak.

The other member-written play was ‘Waiting’ by Christopher Morgan who also directed it. For all of us who have ever sat amongst a group of strangers wondering about their lives, it was ideal. In a succession of interesting and entertaining statements, seven very disparate individuals sitting in a Soho bar speak about themselves, their disappointments and hopes. I kept expecting a connection to emerge, but none did and the lack of movement and dialogue resulted in some of the cast performing rather unconfidently. Elaine Sweeney as the barmaid, Natasha Bergg as a statuesque blonde and Jonathan Adcock as a lovelorn office-worker seemed the most realistic.

In ‘Thinking Aloud’, written in the 1940s by Emyln Williams, a famous film star waiting on a lonely railway platform (with real steam!) is joined by a creepy-looking man. As they sit silently, pretending to ignore each other, we hear their thoughts. It seems she has just shot her husband and wonders if the man is on her trail, but apparently he has been obsessed by her for years. Diana Dishley, who was also the director, and Stephen Pearce played the roles with admirable restraint, resisting the temptation to over-react to the dialogue.

‘With All My Love I Hate You!’ by Linda Marchal, a two-hander directed by Gary Burgess, had also won an award at Chalfont. Fiona Sakwa played a wronged wife who calls unexpectedly on her husband’s mistress (Esther Holt). Both gave compelling performances which always rang true, with every word as clear as a bell. In less assured hands, lines like “I want you to kill me” could have led to titters from the audience but the steadily rising tension between them came over as completely genuine and held the audience’s rapt attention throughout.

Each of the plays was well served by a simple set and the sound, lighting, costumes and make-up were always excellent. Smooth front-of-house arrangements - efficient ticketing, varied refreshments and a colourful programme - added to the enjoyment.

If you didn’t go, why not put the date of their next production on 23rd, 24th & 25th November 2007 in your diary now - On this form, it will be thoroughly worth seeing.

John Harrison