



Society : Beaufort Players
Production : 'Noises Off'
Date : Sat 20th Nov 2010
Venue : Church of the Ascension Hall, Beaufort Road
Report by : Sam Webb

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There is nothing worse I can possibly think of than seeing a version of a play which I hold fond memories of being trashed by Am Dramers. Interestingly, if I were to pick one play to fall into this category it would be that of Frayn's 'Noises Off', yet Beaufort Players once again defy expectations, pulling together like the close knit family they clearly are, to produce their intimate interpretation with well timed comedy, fantastic acting and probably one of the most complex sets I have seen in their small hall; a massive challenge for a small stage.

Elaine O'Sullivan had clear intentions as a director and her knowledge and skill was applied well to the performance. The comedy was delivered clearly and concisely and the characters which had been developed by the cast assisted the interpretation.

Act one introduced us to our well judged characters, some personifications, some more believable, if there was to be one criticism, some of the acting 'in the play' produced much the same characters as those in the 'troupe', (deliberate?) still believable though, and the audience were able to indentify with them.

Jane Quill played Dotty, with a well judged amount of dithering and forgetfulness. Perhaps a bit more interaction facially with the fourth wall would have voiced her intentions and thoughts. Speech was clear at all times and her costume was spot on.

Daniel Cawtheray mostly felt comfortable in his role. There was a good presence on stage and when moving he had good use of the space and set, and great timing for his entrances. There was also a nice clear rapport with **Gemma Breakell**. Gemma's delivery was first-class, and her facial expressions were wonderfully matched with her vocal emotion. Her personality and her 'relationship' was characterised well within the portrayal of Brooke.

Alan Robinson as the wonderful Selsdon, who really didn't need a huge change from the character afore-mentioned to that of the burglar, exposed as in Frayn's decision not to give the Burglar a name. Yet Alan's interpretation was humorous, clearly 'acting the dream' as the stereotypical drunk, due to his age, played up, but with care and consideration to comedy, body and reactions facially and physically; the character was one which we were able to empathise with and laugh at.

June Burgess used her comedy timing to great effect, with some great interaction on the set with the set and other characters.

Martin Roe also played Frederick with matching comedy timing, although some of the pace of dialogue could have been a little quicker with more emphasis. The character's negotiations around the set were filled with comedy, simple movements and reactions.

Then we had our backstage team, in stereotypical costumes, acting just like those in the backstage world; slightly glum, fed up and never too enthused. I have seen many reincarnations of **Thom Cobb**'s character in many theatres I have worked in. I'm sure some close observations have taken place to ensure a precise character. **Vicky Prior** also showed potential as a withered yet do-gooder stage manager, trying to get to grips with an incompetent cast and a slightly pushy director. Vicky's stage debut showed promise, mostly clear dialogue and engagement with a character and I'm sure with further opportunity to tread the boards, has the ability to be moulded into a fabulous actress with further roles on stage.

Finally there was our 'Director' played by **Matthew Tylianakis** beautifully flouncy, yet pushy (like so many thesp!) giving us that pinch of theatrical reality we needed to be reminded of once in a while. The booming dialogue from the back of the auditorium to the stage was that of a hard to match performance, and the journey he took us on was held with attitude and emotional intent throughout.

The comedy applied to the stage and director from the back was brilliant, and it was a shame that the audience was a little weak. There were a couple of instances, especially in act 2, where the required movements and comings and goings needed by some of the visual gags were hindered by the lack of space between some of the actors. There were a couple of moments where the comedy was clearly implied amongst the actors or the scene within the delivery, but there was potential for a few more humorous moments which could have supplemented some of the funny parts in the writing, perhaps with responding secondary visual gags; for example, when Tim came on, could he not have brought on the Gin, as if he had confiscated it from Selsdon? Then there could have been further comedy with him reacting for it or perhaps a bit of a tug of war. When the curtains failed to close could one or two of the cast members pulled them to add further effect to the gag? Could anything else have happened; a light fall down or something else to add craziness. I think what I am asking is; are they any comedy moments that weren't in the script that could have been added to? I pose these as I know that Beaufort are talented and further challenge for the next show can always be thought about. That said there was a laugh at every corner; well executed Beaufort!

The complex set, expertly crafted to allow the two major transitions was strong and practical within the proximity of space given. The 'backstage' doors all looked real and even with the excess of movement the set was constantly supported and sturdy. Congratulations to **Tom Cobb and Ted Alcock**. **Pete Balls** also did a masterful job of producing a lighting plot which lit the set and kept our actors out of the dark.

The sound effects, delivered on time both from the front and backstage view and always appropriate. Well done again **Roger Dishley!** If I may make a criticism, I feel the sound system does seem to struggle a little for clarity, and that may need a small investment to ensure the sound quality matches that of your theatre!

Sorry if there is someone I haven't mentioned by name, but clearly a fulfilled team mission, quality and skill all the way.

Elaine did a FANTASTIC job and the entire company should be very proud of the performances. Pop that in the ever-increasing 'Brilliant Beaufort Show' file.

Sam Webb

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