

Society : The Beaufort Players
 Production : Vetting Procedures
 Date : 11th July 2026
 Venue : The Ascension Hall
 District : London District 2

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Show Report

As a new NODA Representative, I found this to be a wonderful and thoroughly enjoyable introduction to the role. The Beaufort Players were warm and welcoming and so many of you came to greet me. In particular I would like to thank Thomas Cobb (Chairman, playwright, director, set and poster designer!) Roger Dishley (Sound) and Lainey Cobb (Treasurer) who were all generous with their time and provided me and fellow NODA Rep, Thomas Lennon, who so kindly accompanied me, with valuable information about the group, the play and your theatre at the Ascension Hall.

“Vetting Procedures” is very much a modern farce and it certainly ticks all the boxes for the genre: rapid pace, physical comedy and everyday conflicts spiralling into mayhem. Set in a veterinary office this comedy had it all: slamming doors, frantic and well-timed entrances and exits, mistaken identity and disguise, slapstick and visual gags and no lost opportunities to exploit animal puns – it was purr-fectly delightful. This in-house play was well-written and deftly directed by Thomas Cobb. The audience may have been small in number (probably due to a clash with the World Cup England game) but it was loud in laughter and applause.

Set – this was excellent. The “Little Paws” vet’s office was bright, colourful, modern and entirely convincing – kudos to the Beaufort Builders! I admired the clever use of five sturdy doors, some complete with “occupied” signs, which added to the chaotic action. The whole effect was entirely authentic, featuring framed professional qualifications, medical posters, a cabinet full of medications, a little ringing bell on the entrance door, even the obligatory waiting-room pot plant in the corner – the attention to detail was impressive. A feature I particularly liked was the use of the paws logo/decal which recurred on the décor and even appeared on the mugs and brown paper bags. Well done to the **Stage Management** team of Amy Maclaine and Craig Serventy, who delivered a seemingly flawless production.

Props were many, always appropriate and essential to the busy plot. I lost count of the different cat carriers that came on and off the stage. Well done to Ana Bretes who must have had a busy job. In general animals did not appear on stage but were indicated convincingly by sounds off. The one element that was not quite so realistic was the appearance of Molly the cat on a string. Although this added to the hilarity of the scene I felt a slightly more life-like cat may have been more effective.

Costume, according to the programme, was cast’s own, all well-chosen and appropriate to character. I’m sure the two vet outfits were the exception to this rule. I particularly liked the choice of two different colours but co-ordinating colours for these costumes.

Prompt was provided by Krystina Kobiak, who also served on the ticket desk. I am pleased to say that during the performance that I saw, her prompting services were unnecessary!

Sound, by Roger Dishley, was excellent, featuring animal noises and very apt cat-themed music. I would have liked a little more music at the beginning of the Acts and perhaps a little less during the times when tabs were closed to indicate the transition of time during the play, but this is a very minor criticism. I particularly liked the effect of the music in Michael Mewes' headphones being audible to the audience when he was wearing them and then stopping abruptly when he removed them.

I was worried about how effective the lighting would be because with so many windows in the hall and bright sunshine outside it was impossible to create darkness for the audience. However, **Lighting**, designed by Pete Balls and operated by Natasha Barry and Jane Quill, was excellent. One tiny suggestion: the light we could see through the glass door stage right could have been changed to indicate the change in time of day as an alternative to closing the tabs.

Programme – by Kate Martin, this was both informative, well-laid out and an entertaining read – the inclusion of the pet pics was a nice touch.

Now on to the cast. Although some roles were bigger than others this was very much a group effort, with no weak links.

Tony Giuliano, as Michael Mewes, gave us a performance that was full of energy from the moment he danced onto the stage. His pace was fantastic, as was his projection, his natural Scottish accent added to this pun-loving, slightly manic character, desperately trying and failing to stay on top of an out of control situation. His loose-limbed body language and expressive face all added to an impressive characterisation.

Will Birgand-Camps played the hapless Dylan Kitts, torn between two women. Instead of portraying a heartless womaniser, Will created an entirely likeable character. His nervous body language and his great physicality, diving behind desks and so on, was just right. Occasional dips in projection, especially when facing upstage, might be something to watch out for in future, but overall a lovely, endearing performance.

Meg Lambie was outstanding as Ashleigh, who was not all she seemed to be. An instinctive comedienne, Meg uses her face, her physicality and her whole demeanour to make the audience laugh and her comic timing is perfect. So much so, that her transition into the “other” serious Ashleigh, who was involved in the unsuccessful drug heist came as a shock to the audience. Her incarnation as “sexy bunny” Ashleigh was hilarious!

It is hard to play the straight role in a play so full of comedic characters, but **Gemma Robinson** did this beautifully. Aisling was the perfect foil to the crazy antics going on all around her. She also brought a touch of glamour to the play in her lovely evening dress. Nice work, Gemma.

Martin Roe had the task of playing three characters – not just Inspector Gorton, but also his two characters “in disguise” – the nervous pet-owner and the old lady. The first disguise was more convincing than the second, but I suspect this may have been deliberate for comic effect. All were well-portrayed. As Inspector Gorton you were suitably officious, keeping a straight face and carrying on regardless during a rather manic scene where the temptation to corpse must have been very great.

Shain Collins as Mrs Mandragore, transitioned so well from straight-laced Councillor to a drugged, limp-limbed character who gave the audience a When-Harry-Met Sally-esque performance which the audience loved. Good work, Shain.

Congratulations to **Barry Taylor** on his first stage performance as Casey the cockney criminal. I'm not sure if the accent is your own or created but you certainly would have been at home in Albert Square with the Mitchell brothers! You were very believable and I would not have picked you out as a newbie if it had not said so in the programme.

And last but by no means least, **Nitish Kaul** as the un-named Dog-Owner, delivered another convincing performance. You were very good as the annoying, demanding customer and your frantic tussles with the off-stage Bruiser were realistic and very amusing.

I can't conclude this report without saying that your bows were some of the best I've seen – funny, fast-paced, in character and just as entertaining as the rest of the play. Thank you once again for inviting me and I look forward to future performances of The Beaufort Players.

Ceri Nicolson

NODA Regional Representative, London District 2

14th July 2026