

## 'MY FRIEND MISS FLINT'

### A REVIEW OF THE BEAUFORT PLAYERS' PRODUCTION

22 - 24 JANUARY 2004

We should all like to ignore our annual tax returns. No-one wants a close encounter of the fraught kind with the Inland Revenue. So no audience could fail to sympathise with Tom, the hapless hero of this comedy.

Tom is a botanist who has become a media gardening celebrity. He employs Albert, failed actor and successful rogue, to clean his flat. Tom may live in a trendy riverside conversion and own a Picasso, but he is a scruffy academic at heart. We first meet him in the messy aftermath of a drinking bout with a pretty market researcher who knocked on his door and then stayed the night. Tom can't even remember her name.

His carefree bachelor life is threatened suddenly by his estranged wife Sarah, who also happens to be his accountant. Tom has never noticed that she has made tax claims on his behalf over five years, for the services of a non-existent public relations consultant. Now "Miss Flint" owes a large amount of tax on her own account - enter Mr Gilbert Dodds from the Revenue. He too has secrets. Nothing is quite what it seems, including the Picasso.

Martin Roe made an attractive Tom in the Cary/Hugh Grant tradition, bemused and endearing. He and Roger Dishley, who played Albert with leering gusto, were a great comic duo. Esther Lathan was all cool elegance as clever but unprincipled Sarah. The audience loved Lucy, the little seductress with her own line in tax evasion, a character given real sex appeal by Emma Dainesi. Maureen Jenkins as Cynthia the senior tax investigator, who turns out to be Mr Dodd's ex-wife, worked convincingly with Chris Burns as the unctuous Dodds to change from hostility into sentiment.

Congratulations to Diana Dishley for directing strong personalities through a complex plot with such amusing results. We have come to expect a fine set from Ted Adcock, excellently lit by Peter Balls, and once again we got it

As seen in this production, the Beaufort Players is now a mix of much loved stalwarts with young, talented new members. This promises well for the future of the company. Everyone involved deserves credit, but I should just like to mention Alan Robinson's graphic design, Ian Eckersley's wallpapering, Eshani Weerasinghe's courage in undertaking sound, Jayne Bowman as an exemplary prompt and the delight taken by Iman and Baz Basu Roy (props) in their "party mess".

Tax fiddles may not pay, but they make for a lot of fun on stage.

Jay Cayley