

'THREE OF A KIND'

by Donald Churchill and Peter Yeldham

A REVIEW OF THE BEAUFORT PLAYERS' PRODUCTION

21ST & 22ND MAY 2004

'Three of a Kind' consisted of three short plays, preceded by fish and chips and ice-cream, with an interval for coffee and a bar throughout. Altogether a recipe for an enjoyable evening!

Furthermore the three productions had all won Certificates of Merit at the annual Chalfont St Peter Drama Festival a month earlier and one, 'Last Tango in Little Grimley', had also won the Adjudicator's Award, Best Actress nominations for Tamsin Barker and Elaine Sweeney and Best Actor nominations for Gerard Glynn and Baz Basu Roy.

The first play, 'What's for Pudding?', was a lively comedy by David Tristram about a bored wife whose husband seems to have overlooked their wedding anniversary. Sharp barbs flew entertainingly to and fro as they endeavoured to cope with three unexpected guests. Jayne Bowman and Alan Robinson portrayed the couple very effectively, helped particularly by Ian Eckersley who showed a delightful sense of timing in his obsession with a mail-order catalogue. All the cast kept up a good pace throughout and Elaine O'Sullivan, a long-standing Beaufort Player, should be delighted at the success of her first solo-directing experience.

Next came 'Us & Them', a more serious play about two small groups of women who are initially friendly but become suspicious and hostile after building a wall between them to keep their respective livestock in check. Ably directed by the sure hand of Diana Dishley (who also took part), it was all the more powerful for not being tied to any time or location, though apparently the author, David Campton, wrote it for teenagers to perform in Northern Ireland in the early years of the Troubles. Well supported by a pair of narrators, the two groups gave convincing and thought-provoking depictions of their changing relationship. The miming of the construction of the wall and later its dismantling could easily have looked ludicrous but they succeeded in making everything seem totally plausible.

Finally came 'Last Tango in Little Grimley', also by David Tristram. This was the directing debut of Peter Dearman, another Beaufort Players' stalwart, so particular congratulations are due to him and the cast for achieving such success at the Chalfont St Peter Festival. The play was a four-part tale of the dying days of a village amateur dramatic group whose membership has shrunk to four. When the director announces that their only hope is to do a sex-play, the other three react at first with horror. But when the news spreads and the ticket bookings soar (even the vicar wants to bring a group), they start to relish the idea of casting off their inhibitions. Gerard Glynn played the director with great zest - and certainly no one would have guessed that he had spent the Friday afternoon having his head stitched in A&E after an accident.

All three plays were presented in front of black drapes but in each case the actors were so convincing that it was only as I was walking home afterwards that I realised there had been no scenery. The lighting and costumes gave good support and the box office and front-of-house arrangements were, as always, welcoming and efficient.

Seventeen of the nineteen parts were played by actors from the recent influx of new members, many of whom were on stage for the first time. So it's heartening to see the Beaufort Players going from strength to strength.

For their next production, they are planning a pantomime on 25, 26 & 27 November. On this form, it'll definitely be a show to see.

John Harrison