



Society : Beaufort Players  
 Production : Titfield Thunderbolt  
 Date : April 2009  
 Venue : Beaufort Hall, Ealing  
 Report by : Sam Webb

## Report

When approaching a dram group for the first time with no knowledge of their ability and show quality, any NODA representative would approach with an air of caution (hoping to be pleasantly surprised) as I did when I came to see the Beaufort Players performance of 'The Titfield Thunderbolt'. Fortunately the performance I saw on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2009 was extremely pleasant, well presented and beautifully acted.

### **DIRECTOR**

Your director, Diana Dishley had a clear vision which was realised with effectiveness. When using a black box stage you have to be wary of how you present the design and use set and costumes in relationship to the stage. You managed this with a degree of effectiveness but I feel there may have been other ways to make your stage presentation a bit more varied. With such an open stage you could look at the potential of using projections or maybe putting some of your set on trucks. The poster which was placed on the stage, unfortunately didn't look authentic and it is smaller details like this that led a few elements of your production to stray away from the professional standard of many other aspects. You had decided to use Velcro in your set, this was a useful device to ensure your changes were quick, however this sometimes created a noise, cover it with music and it would have been a further success. Your use of audience interaction was incredibly successful and at many points I had noted how well the audience responded to it. The ensemble of the cast imitating the movements of the train was another very successful technique. When a gun was used in Act 2 I felt you lost the authenticity by using a SFX, always try and use a replica gun that can make its own noise. Emotions had been displayed well however the moment when Edna and Joan found out the train had been destroyed could have been emphasised further. Scene transitions were generally good, however before scene 6 we were left in the dark, stranded for too long. The train at the end which came across the stage was a delightful touch however looked messy and the entrance wasn't clean, the bows however were and after a very successful production I felt you could have bounced the tabs, you had a very good reception and the audience wouldn't have minded at all.

### **THE CAST**

**Rachel Thorn** displayed the a talented performance at the start of the evening to set the standard of a very talented group. By showing she could not only act with a superb diction and vocal quality but how she could also play the piano she opened the show with a warm traditional feel. The determination of the character was clear in a rich and truthful performance throughout the evening.

**Kester Worme** playing Clifton opened the show with a booming voice that set the scene and vocal professionalism for the audience. The presence and confidence he displayed on stage was strong filled with passion.

**Alan Robinson** again showed confidence, I noted a very good use of dramatic pauses in the dialogue of Mr Blackworth, helping to extend and improve dramatic intensity of the text. The address to the audience was presented with self-belief and a true openness. A strong posture led the character and a high quality of voice projection complimented the physicality.

**Chris Sinclair** presented us with the dirty character of Dan Tayloe whose characterisation was very watchable, with attention to detail in his facial expressions and actions. His voice was well judged, however there was, on the odd occasion a loss of the good diction which meant a few words were lost.

**Martin Roe** as the sneaky and manipulative Vernon Crump played the part with a high degree of character awareness. The awareness of body movement and eye line showed good understanding of the character and the interaction with others on stage. The intentions of your character were made clear throughout your dialogue and personification.

**Craig McCrindle** with his snotty nose and his dirty clothes presented a deeply comical characterisation, a stereotypical dirty farm boy with strong gestures and a clear sense of interaction. He was able to display a good contrast when he took on the role of the Sergeant. His dialogue was very honest, and believable throughout.

**Gemma Breakell** has a total believability in her acting; the characterisation was superb, the posture, interaction and clear and concise vocal work was spot on. Use of mine was fabulous; the character was continually aware of what they were miming and where it goes, how to put it down and pick it up, this professionalism continued into the speech where there was good awareness of emphasis in your dialogue.

**Chris Burns** displayed a modest character with good diction which was clear and the character was demonstrated with confidence. At times the character felt a little withdrawn but in contrast this subtlety worked and created a good balance with the other bolder characterisations on stage. There was a hint of eccentricity in the management of the role which added a further light and shade in Sam's dialogue. The reaction to the news in the paper was good but I feel a reaction involving more fury and disgust would have deepened the emotions.

**Martin Perrott** showed a high awareness of character, expressions were good and worked well with your delivery of dialogue, however sometimes between your dialogue these expressions were lost between lines.

**Amy Jackson** was clear in her performance with an ease of confidence and showed strong acting ability throughout the show. The character has a wonderful gaze which was used with a high degree of professionalism.

**Matt Tylanakis** showed competence in his role and his stage craft matched that of other actors in the performance.

**Sylvia Hennen** playing a small part but was effective in her portrayal ensuring, in the short space of time on stage a character, who had a stern comical dimension was made apparent.

**Tom Fobb** also played a smaller part but ensured he was effective in the presentation. Another confident address to the audience.

#### ***STAGE MANAGEMENT AND BACKSTAGE CREW***

Your stage management, under the authority of **Ted Alcock** were orchestral in their set changes, working collaboratively to ensure the set was moved at a good pace and in the right places. By making a directorial choice to change the scenery in front of the audience, making the backstage crew often visible, it may have been an idea to dress all of those working backstage in train uniforms and choreograph each of the changes.

#### ***LIGHTING***

The lighting, designed by **Eshani Weeresinghe** was simplistic, with nothing original or ornate it did what it had to do, but it was well operated by **Pete Balls**. You had preset lights on stage which created a good atmosphere and showed us that care had been taken to 'set the scene'. The pictures that were placed across the stage could have been highlighted with a 'special'.

#### ***SOUND***

Your sound provided by **Roger Dishley** was presented on cue at the right pitch with a good judgement of volume throughout the piece.

#### ***COSTUMES AND PROPS***

Your period costumes were suitably fitting for the event, with the contrast between the pristine characteristics and those dirtier depictions of characters nicely signified to the audience by the costumes provided.

#### ***FLYER, ARTWORK AND PUBLICITY***

Your art work and publicity was professionally designed. The graphic provided was simple yet its point was clear.

I hope this provides an insight into just how good your production was, I was very excited to see such a talented groups of actors on stage and wish you every success with 'Daisy' which I hope I can come along to.

Sam Webb

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