



Society : Beaufort Players
Production : Bouncers and Shakers
Date : Sat 31st July
Venue : Church of the Ascension Hall
Report by : Sam Webb

Report

Yet another bold move by the Beaufort Players! Staging a multi role comedy by an established playwright is a big ask, and was, again, executed with success, class and comic timing. Both shows were produced by new directors, no doubt helped by the more established knowledge of members from the group; and both individuals successfully created atmosphere and characters, well spaced and always well judged.

The evening started with 'Bouncers', examining the life and work of four bouncers and their encounters in their occupations, beginning with an interesting dance successfully pulling in our attentions. Sometimes a little out of sync; it was comic and fun all the same. As our bouncers got themselves ready it all became a little tighter and so the performance continued at this level. Some attractive use of movement in the crowd scenes, the pushing, barging and shouting in the crowd scenes gave us illusion of the club scene. Characters were developed well. I felt that spacing on the stage was often in lines; although not a setback some use of levels may have made the aesthetic more dynamic and visually stimulating. The direction of the dialogue was clean and clear, a little slow in pace to start, but after a couple of minutes was timely and the direct audience addresses were spot on. Well done to **Russell Gillman** on a brawny and bold interpretation of Godber's comedy.

Matthew Carpenter who played Judd had up his sleeve some wonderful characterisations, both voices and physical interpretations which he dispersed throughout the act with care attention and great comic potential. Matthew's comedy precision was often based on peculiar slightly off the wall characters.

Daniel Cawtheray used his strong eye contact to support his role of Lucky Eric; his powerful deep voice supported the masculinity he was portraying, making the juxtaposition of the female impersonations even more humorous.

Craig McCrindle played Les with great comedy delivery; lines often delivered with accuracy and wit. His acting at times felt a little understated, a little more oomph needed behind the characterisation and voice to give the performance more power. Craig's narration to the audience was some of the best in the show, precise and delivered with understanding.

Finally **Chris Sinclair** as Ralph excelled with his use of reactions; both comedic and meaningful. He was strong at portraying opinions and reactions in his delivery. It was obvious that Chris was aware of his fellow actors as his reactions and responses were the best of the show.

Throughout the script it was clear the actors were having great fun finding the moments of comic potential and using them to their advantage. There were a couple of moments where some of the gags could have been shared with the audience '*just watching her, for an hour*' for instance could have been emphasised. However the vast majority of moments were slick and well thought out.

The rapping towards the end of the show was brilliantly funny and wonderfully bad and the repeat of the song finished off a funny, comic and, perhaps, dark performance brilliantly. Great work.

'Shakers' was another wonderfully perceived performance, **Amy Jackson** like the director of 'Bouncers' showed great potential. Her directorial intentions and impact on the play were clear, there were moments when it was clear that the ideas had come from the director and those touches were precise and in keeping with the feelings and meaning of the piece.

The rhyme at the start was well-handled, Charlie and Lisa's bloke impersonations were well symbolised. It was a shame some of the transitions were done in blackout, I believe a well-choreographed transition in the light is always preferable to one in darkness if possible.

The work of the ensemble playing toffs was spot on with observation and interpretation really adding to the piece.

All the monologues held the audiences attention, well paced with attention to detail and the correct emphasis. The gritty, dark and comic stories really hit us and had an impact of truth and depth; the wish of any actor: to truly affect the audience.

Gemma Breakell's Mel was cheeky and true, her dialogue was accurate and characterisations brilliantly detailed, her voice and movements were versatile.

Charlie Froomberg's direct audience address was beautifully coarse, strong and powerful. Her movements added to the character and really attracted the audience's attention when it was needed.

Lisa Morris played femininity and her other roles with brilliant balance and communication with fellow actors. It was obvious that Lisa was committed to her roles in terms of voice and movement.

Rachel Thorn (who wrote another brilliant piece in the programme) was, as always, confident and sharp with her dialogue and very spatially aware. Rachel's ability to balance the stage and work well to take her moment and not overbear through others' moments added to the success of the show.

Staged as a thrust and almost in 'the round', the staging threw up some challenges that were all attacked beautifully with definition and thought. A great show.

Lighting was simple but its ability to take us from one location to another with smooth transitions was effective. The shadow created from the proscenium arch, which hit the cyclorama was a shame and took away from the illusion. Some lovely lighting touches, including strobe lights and the use of colours.

Sound was well executed; on time and on cue. Perhaps there was room for some of the music to be a little louder to give more punch. The lighting often worked in unison with the sound to create atmosphere and feeling.

Congratulations to the professional costume choices, simple yet ever so effective, thanks to the producers for their assistance with staging a brilliant show, well done! Beaufort Players have done it again!

Sam Webb

NODA London District 2