

**BEAUFORT PLAYERS**  
**“NOISES OFF”**  
**18th-20th November 2010**

To stage “Noises Off”, Michael Frayn’s famous 1982 comedy romp about a rep company’s back-stage turmoil was a brave decision on the part of the Beaufort Players. First, many people must have already seen a professional production of it; second it requires a complex set which has to be reversed between acts; third, it involves fast and furious action.

Without doubt the BPs met the challenge with considerable verve. The set, designed by Thomas Cobb and Ted Adcock, was a split-level nine-entrance masterpiece of ingenuity and construction which gave plenty of scope for the cast’s frantic comings and goings. Despite the postage-stamp size of the Ascension hall’s stage, the action never felt cramped.

The first act, a chaotic dress rehearsal in Weston-super-Mare of a farce titled ‘Nothing On’, got the play off to a good start, thanks particularly to being driven by an outstanding performance by Matthew Tylanakis as its hapless director. All sort of mishaps occurred involving everything from sardines and nose bleeds to contact lenses and missing files. Daniel Cawtheray and Gemma Breakell shone playing the young leads, with Martin Roe, Jane Quill, June Burgess and Alan Robinson all doing well as the other members of the company’s cast, though Alan as the sozzled veteran actor never looked quite old enough.

For Act 2, the set was reversed - a herculean feat - to show the chaos backstage during a performance of the same scene in Ashton-under-Lyme. The cast rushed to and fro through the doors, clothes came off, liaisons came to light and alcohol took its toll. Then finally, for the third act, we were back out front again for another hilariously chaotic performance, this time in Stockton-on-Tees.

As the play went on, the cast (the BPs, not the ones they were portraying) seemed to grow in confidence, though Thomas Cobb and Vicky Prior, as the company’s back-stage team, sometimes seemed rather subdued compared with the others.

Altogether high praise is due to the director, Elaine O’Sullivan, a long-standing member of the BPs, for directing such a complicated production so successfully. It flowed well, maintained an admirably fast pace and deservedly won plenty of laughs throughout. The producer was Krystyna Kobiak.

As one has come to expect from the BPs, the technical and administrative back-up was first-class, from the music, lighting, costumes and make-up to the publicity, ticketing, programme and refreshments. Well done everyone!

*John Harrison*