

BEAUFORT PLAYERS

“Comical Allsorts”

29-31 March

This confidently-acted double-bill provided excellent entertainment with lots of laughs throughout. Both plays had quite saucy content so in less skilled hands could have been painfully embarrassing, but the casts went flat out to maximise the humour and no-one could possibly have been offended.

The opening play, “Speakeasy”, was written by BP member Jane Quill who also directed it. It showed the entanglements of a self-help group of five diverse characters meeting over successive weeks. Craig McCrindle played the harassed group leader, Russell Gillman was a startlingly alluring transvestite and Tania Hunt and Paul Miglentsis were realistic drunks. Vicky Prior was suitably plain as the group’s most repressed member, Matt Tylanakis shone as a twitching trouser-dropper and Sarah Pettitt added to the fun as his spectacularly busty girlfriend.

The play cleverly sent up self-help jargon about negatives and positives, sexual identities and “embracing your issues” as well as having many very witty lines. Apparently Jane Quill wrote it 25 years ago, so I was left wondering if she has any others tucked away. The producer was Rachel Thorn.

The second play, “Last Tango in Little Grimley”, used the same set - a simple meeting room with a few chairs but different noticeboards. This time it was the venue for a succession of meetings of the Little Grimley Drama Society whose struggles the BPs have portrayed before. Now the group was down to just four members, enough they said to put on “Robinson Crusoe” but certainly not “Seven Brides for Seven Brothers”.

Their chairman/producer saved the day by suggesting they put on a play involving “sex”. Initially shocked by the idea, the other three members were eventually persuaded and, with publicity stating that ‘this play contains specific scenes of nudity’, the villagers were soon clamouring for tickets. So if the BPs ever hit the doldrums, they know what to do!

Alan Robinson’s powerful performance as the chairman drove the play at a cracking pace, strongly supported by June Burgess, whose initial disgust at the idea turned to delight at the response her brief exposure provoked, Gemma Breakall who was hilariously desperate to be a Seven Brothers’ bride and Ted Hunter as the group’s taciturn set-builder/reluctant actor. Roger Dishley was the director and Diana Dishley the producer.

As one has come to expect from the BPs, the actors were well supported by their colleagues responsible for the set, props, wardrobe, make-up, lighting, sound, refreshments, publicity, programme and ticketing. Well done everyone!

John Harrison