



Be inspired by a

Society : Beaufort Players
Production : The Children
Date : 4th April 2019
Venue : Beaufort Road Ealing
Report by : Mike Smith

Show Report

I must admit I was a little apprehensive about attending this Beaufort production. Not because I felt the quality of the evening's performance would be in question, nor the warmth of the usual Beaufort welcome would be lacking. It was the subject matter - an environmental drama????!!!

It was good to meet with **Julia Marques** before the show, who was taking the reigns and Directing for the first time and was understandably a little nervous.

Glancing through the programme it was good to see familiar names in all departments – I knew this would be a production in safe hands.

I was not disappointed.

The set for the show was cleverly designed and constructed, giving the audience the feel of being inside a seaside cottage. The props and furniture were well thought out and strategically placed, giving a good flow and easy access for each of the players to perform well in a restricted area.

I did miss the blood on the handkerchief, maybe that was just me, I liked seeing the steam rise from the cups when the drinks were poured from the thermos.

I do like the way your group manage to work with minimal set and yet get great results. Well done to creative team. **Ann, Thomas, Chris, Kaiser and Alan.**

Lighting and sound – these both provided the necessary atmospheric effects, particularly with the opening and closing of the cottage door – allowing the audience a moment to experience the outside world. Nicely done **Jane, Pete and Roger.**

Hair and make-up – well done **Krystyna** – the ladies looked stunning, and I loved what you achieved with Robin (Peter) it looked authentic?!! I'm sure you had a real task with the powder puff, in between concentrating on the script in your role as prompt (I only heard you twice – which was amazing with such a wordy dialogue!!)

The cast all looked very comfortable in their own “costumes”, all well-chosen and very much in keeping.

The programme – as usual - was nicely presented and easy to read. I didn't see a poster, but hopefully it was the same as your programme cover. I mean – three gas masked individuals, two in yoga pose, a power station in the background with an ice cream reactor dome drizzled in raspberry sauce and a chocolate flake - and a very inquisitive cow!!! If that didn't catch the imagination, I'm not sure what would! Well done **Vicky** and **Brigite**.

I have deliberately left my comments on the cast until this point.

A three handed play with such a wordy script and so many twists and turns, is a real challenge. The three members of this production rose to the challenge in no uncertain terms.

The play opens with a slightly farcical appearance of Rose (played by **Clare Goodwin**) recovering from a nose -bleed bought on by Hazel (played by **Mary Hill**) who had mistaken this woman, who she hadn't seen for decades and thought she was dead, for an intruder. The two are later joined by Robin (played by **Peter Coles**) Mary's husband, and the plot starts to unfold.

In a brilliantly funny, animated yet slightly sad performance **Mary** shows the fussing Hazel's ill-concealed resentment of her visitor whom she notices is suspiciously familiar with the layout of the cottage. She winds up her wind-up radio as if she were about to attack an insect invasion with DDT. Yet while projecting the appearance of unwavering control, she hacks the hell out of a defenceless salad she is preparing for dinner. You really don't want to turn your back on her when she's got a knife in her hand! She kicks up such a laboured fuss when her visitor has supposedly imposed the wrong sort of waste on the macerator in the loo. Hazel expresses her chirpy fury in a kind of militant healthfulness. She boasts about eating sensibly and keeping fit through yoga – which she demonstrates admirably – her change of mood and attitudes were seamless. **Mary** also had some lovely throw away lines, very nicely delivered.

This was an outstanding performance.

I must say I enjoyed the characterisation of Rose. Rose is the one with the secret, so she is something faintly menacing about the personal warmth and social congeniality of **Clare's** engaging performance. What does this woman really want? Why has she come after 38 years in which the three have been out of touch? What's clear from the micro aggressions, is that she and Hazel, supposedly old friends, are both seething about something. Mischievous and sly – both well portrayed traits – biding her time before springing a trap. Nicely done. Without Rose's agenda the play would have lacked its importance. She even smokes, as if in sympathy with the still smouldering unsecured reactor which is at the heart of the play. This part was certainly a "Baptism of Fire" for **Clare**, I look forward to seeing her in future roles. Well done.

Peter – or should I say Robin – as a man who spends most of his time deflecting the intensities around him, has the trickiest role. His appearance, bursting through the door on a child's tricycle, was a moment of great enjoyment – much to the amusement of the audience.

Peter beautifully conveys the two-timing craftiness of Robin and the unassuming love of a man who has kept up the pretence for his wife that the cows on their farm are still alive. Whilst he has been quietly burying them. Robin is a man of secrets – (the cows are not the only one) – or so he thinks.

This role was portrayed with what appeared to be minimum effort – almost Jekyll and Hyde, not an easy task. It was tackled with, and I take the words from your bio, “Affection and Humour”. You may have been grateful to have been cast in the role, but I’m sure the audience was more than grateful that you were.

A gentle finish to a strong and powerful play.

Teamwork - this came through loud and clear.

Three strong characters – each one played by three very accomplished members of Beaufort.

The interaction between all three was a pleasure to watch, (I think you might consider auditioning for “Strictly Come Dancing” in the future)!

The script as I have already mentioned was incredibly wordy, diction throughout was clear and concise. It is a credit to all three players to have delivered such a well-polished production. Also, a credit to the Director for creating such a well-crafted piece of theatre.

Having to Direct a play such as “The Children” takes courage, a dedicated cast and a strong support team, Beaufort Players certainly have all these elements.

The evening was most enjoyable, ending with hearty well deserved applause from a small but very appreciative audience. I’m sure we all left with an abundance of thought-provoking questions on which to reflect.

Thank you for your invitation, I look forward to visiting in July. Good Luck Jane with Clown Nation.

Mike Smith.

District 2

NODA Representative London.