



Society : Riverside Players  
Production : **HAYWIRE**  
Date : Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2013  
Venue : The Memorial Hall, Old Windsor  
Report by : Gordon Bird, NODA Representative, Area 14

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## Report

I was delighted to be invited to see Riverside Players play *Haywire*. The play written by Eric Chappell who wrote many successful television comedies in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s (including *Only When I Laugh*, *Duty Free* and *Rising Damp*) has all the hallmarks of his comic skills.

The play centres on bookshop keeper Alec Firth and his affair with Liz, his assistant. He arranges his wife to go on a coach trip, someone to look after his mother – all so that he can go off for a week in the sun with his assistant. Of course, nothing runs smoothly and when his mother runs away from the home, his son and heavily pregnant daughter turn up, Alec has to keep adapting his plans.

As always, Riverside Players gave a polished performance with a good set and effective sound and lighting plots.

### **ALAN PAYN (Alec Firth)**

The role of Alec requires the actor to be on stage for most of the show, with only a few pages off stage. It requires great skill by the actor to keep concentration as well as deliver an enormous amount of lines. Alan successfully accomplished both attributes with aplomb. He always looked comfortable with his lines and remained in character throughout. Alan's facial expressions were excellent, with lots of furtive looks to the side that invariably received a chuckle. One very small note, I noticed you kept reviewing/cataloguing the same book at beginning of act 1 scene 2 when you could have so easily have chosen other books. The only reason I noticed is that I was trying to read it's title! Overall this was an impressive, solid performance by Alan.

### **VICKI ARNOLD (Liz)**

I have seen several productions by Riverside and have always been impressed by Vicki. She has a talent for finding the character and always delivers. Her speech is clear, precise and offers variation to tone. Her performance of Liz was no exception, easily capturing the shop assistant with whom Alec was having an affair.

### **JILL DANDY (Maggie Firth)**

Jill played the part of Alec's wife, Maggie. She played this role very well, ensuring that we did not have any clues of the reveal at the end of Act two and her real intentions for her coach trip. Jill delivers her lines very well and to good comic effect, in particular the emphasis on "she's your mother Alec".

### **LENA VANTOL (Phoebe Firth)**

Playing a role older than oneself is always difficult and overall Lena made a good effort as the role of Phoebe, Alec's mother. Her character was spot on and overall her movement was well executed although I would have liked a better variation following Phoebe's stroke, perhaps restricted movement

on her limbs maybe? I did like the characterised laugh – very well delivered and achieved a good comic reaction. This was a good effort by Lena.

**ALEX TAGGART (Jamie Firth)**

I have seen Jamie a couple of times and each time you can see the improvement. This was his most comfortable part to date, looking very at ease on stage. He was proficient with his lines, with good volume and moves around the stage very naturally. I would have liked to have seen the crutches used a lot more as they were dispensed with quite quickly. I don't think anyone who had that time of injury would have recovered that quickly. I understand that they were dismissed to help the pace and reduce the uncomfortable sound, however, I think it would have enhanced your character and given you new and different ways to move and act.

**SAMANTHA SOMERVILLE (Mandy Firth)**

I understand that Samantha is going to study drama in Guildford although giving her performances to date I am not quite sure how much more she will learn. Samantha once again gave an honest characterisation – and again as an expectant mother! She acts very well with her “bump”, taking time to rise out of the chair and moving very realistically. Samantha's diction and emphasis of lines are perfectly delivered, with lovely intonation and variation of speech. I am sure she will enjoy her experience at Guildford and look forward to seeing her in the future.

**Director (RICHARD WALLEY)**

**Assistant Director (AMIE MACURA)**

**Rehearsal Assistants (SUSAN PICKLES)**

Congratulations to the directing team – this was another excellent show. I loved the choice of music between scenes (David Grey's song “*Babylon*” and Queen's “*Under pressure*”) that just help set the scene. The play was very well cast, movement was very well defined and all entrances and exits clearly on cue. The pace was very well delivered and the comedy was understood.

**Stage management (SIMON ARNOLD) & crew**

Simon and his crew managed the show without any noticeable hitch. The show ran smoothly with all props being set and struck without any problems and everyone seemed to have met the cues promptly.

**Set**

Another wonderful box set, sturdily constructed and suitably decorated with lovely red, white and gold wallpaper, adorned with suitable hanging pictures. There were boxes of books down stage left and right so we immediately understood the location of the show.

**Lighting (ROGER LEWISTON) &**

**Sound (MARK HASTINGS & JONATHAN STACEY)**

Once again Roger provided a good lighting plot with an accomplished lighting wash that ensured everyone could be seen without any shadows. I loved the attention to detail – with the lovely blues through window and good use of UV light for sunbed.

The sound was perfectly applied, and noticed the attention to detail with sound coming from different speakers to give illusion of outside.

I understand that this was the first show that I have watched at Riverside where mics were not fitted to the cast and in my view, the cast responded magnificently as I heard every word by every member of the cast.

### **Costumes**

All the costumes seemed appropriate to the age and social status of the character. There were some very quick changes that were expertly handled by the cast. The change so the costumes between scenes (between act one scene one and 2, for example) help to denote a passage of time. I am sure everyone enjoyed the costume choice for Alec at the beginning of act 2 scene 2, sombrero, very brief briefs and colourful Hawaiian shirt! Just perfect for the character! Having seen what the character of Liz had to wear later on in that act, it was no wonder mics were not worn for this production!

### **Properties**

All the properties were appropriate to location, a bookshop, and to the period.

### **Makeup**

The makeup seemed perfectly applied as I could see all the faces under the lighting. The makeup that Lena used for the role of the mother was very well applied, realistic and not too heavy.

### **Front of house**

Once again, my wife and I were warmly greeted by the front of house team, making our evening even more enjoyable.

### **Programme**

The free programme gave all the relevant information for the show, a cast and crew list and biographies.

I always enjoy the high standards Riverside Players aspire to with their shows and I admire the attention to detail they give to all aspects of the production. This was another slick production by a well rehearsed and talented society.



**Gordon Bird**  
***NODA representative***  
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