



Society : Riverside Players
Production : **IT RUNS IN THE FAMILY**
Date : Saturday 29th March 2014
Venue : The Memorial Hall, Old Windsor
Report by : Gordon Bird, NODA Representative, Area 14

Report

Ray Cooney has written some wonderful farces over the years, and *It Runs In The Family*, written in 1992, is no exception. Set three days before Christmas in a doctor's common room at London's St Andrews Hospital, it centres round Dr Mortimer's impending lecture to gathering of distinguished neurologists. The speech is one that will formulate his future. Meanwhile there is a rehearsal for the local Boxing Day pantomime. When Dr Mortimer's old flame arrives on the scene after 18 years and announces that he is a father, all the components are in place for confusion and misunderstanding with hilarious consequences.

Riverside Players once again produced a play of superb pace from the first moment to last, keeping the tempo going throughout. The set was once again very well constructed, dressed and lit; ensuring an enjoyable evenings' entertainment.

Dr David Mortimer (ALAN PAYN)

I have seen Alan several times over the last few years and have always been impressed with his capacity for learning lines and find a character. His performance of Dr Mortimer is a huge role and once again Alan delivered a perfect character and wonderful line delivery and cue bit. It is so important in farce that lines as well as the action flows and most of the pace comes from the main role. The situations, however bizarre, were believable because we believed in your performance. Excellent.

Dr Mike Connolly (MATT LUGG)

This is the first time I have seen Matt on stage and he performed the role of one of the doctors very well. His volume and line delivery were fine and he was excellent when he was forced to take up the role of the matron!

Rosemary Mortimer (VICKI ARNOLD)

Vicki always produces a believable character and interacts very well with those on stage. Her role of Dr Mortimer's wife was very well portrayed. Her delivery at the end of the play on how Rosemary occupied her evenings when Dr Mortimer was "busy" was superbly delivered. Well done on another excellent performance.

Dr Hubert Bonney (FRASER MOTION)

I have not seen Fraser perform before and was very impressed on his performance of Dr Hubert Bonney who ended up as the reluctant accomplice to Dr Mortimer's lies and deceits.

His characterisation was spot on – perfectly understood and his line delivery contained good weight, ensuring that that the “joke” was delivered expertly. His comic timing was could not be bettered, ensuring every ounce of comedy was delivered. Excellent performance, well done.

Matron (SUSAN BELL)

I enjoyed Susan’s portrayal of the hospital’s matron. She gave the impression of a no-nonsense cantankerous battleaxe, a bit of a dragon, which gave a marvellous impact when she showed a softer side when Dr Bonney propositioned her. Well done.

Sir Willoughby Drake (RICHARD WHALEY)

As the head of the hospital, Richard gave a very believable performance. His costume, mannerisms, vocal delivery were all perfect to the role of the no nonsense pompous head. This was once again another excellent character performance by Richard.

Jane Tate (Charlotte Moore)

Charlotte’s role of the old nurse returning after 18 years produces the spark that gets the comedy going. I have seen Charlotte a couple of times and she always produces a solid, reliable performance and she continued that trend with another strong performance. She always looks so relaxed on stage and moves effortlessly.

Sister (JILL DADY)

I always find it difficult to direct and be in the show at the same time – but Jill did not seem to have any problems in playing the role of the hospital sister. And it certainly did not affect her role as the director of the show.

Leslie (ALEX TAGGART)

Alex produced an excellent performance as the punk rocker son. I have witnessed Alex in several productions over the years and would say that this is probably his best performance to date. He really got under the skin of the character, being threatening, frustrated and angry one moment but also sensitive and loving the next. His reactions to finding out about who is father is, was very well delivered indeed, showing real understanding of the characters emotions. Well done.

Police Sergeant (SIMON ARNOLD)

One can always rely on Simon to give a solid character performance and as the poor put upon police Sergeant being given the run around, Simon once again delivered. The speech towards the end was very well delivered.

Bill (ROGER BLACKMAN)

The eccentric old man who thought he was moving into a new ward, Roger gave an admirable performance as Bill Leslie. His introduction added to the comic potential and further misunderstandings and Roger delivered, with a dead pan expression that added to the comic element. Considering the lack of space, I thought Roger did exceptionally well handling the wheelchair.

Mother (KAY SMITH)

This is the sort of part I like to play – a small character part that appears towards the end of the show. Kay gave a believable performance as Dr Bonneys mother, showing a lovely characterisation and excellent mannerisms.

Director (JILL DADY)

Assisted by (“JOCK” COOPER)

This was a very tight, well cast, good pace show. Even though there were a couple of prompts on the night I watched, the pace never dropped, so critical in a farce. The entrances and exits looked well defined and did not appear false. Movement and general blocking was good, with clear views of the focus on the scene and purpose for the movement. I heard every single word uttered by every member of the cast. I know that there was some amplified support for the actors, however, so many times I witness poor line delivery (not necessarily level, although that is unfortunately common) but the speed or clarity of delivery, with many words being swallowed or lines being delivered too fast. May I congratulate you all on ensuring that every word was heard – so important in a fast moving comedy as this. The direction of the scenes on the window ledge was outstanding – very well acted and visually effective

Stage management & crew

As I have come to expect from this society, the stage was very well run, with all the props in place, all the effects delivered on cue.

Set

One of the things that always impress me about this group is their attention to detail. This set was very well dressed with excellent set furnishings. The moment we arrived we could tell this was set during Christmas owing to the tree down stage right. This was supported by the usual Christmas paraphernalia of cards, tinsel but also the time of year was emphasised by the grey/white painted back drop. Being a farce it required several doors and all were perfectly constructed, offering good views in side and did not block any action when open. I loved the idea of the occasional waft of clouds floating across the sky line!

Lighting (ROGER LEWISTON) & Sound (MARK HASTINGS)

In many respects this was an easy show for these two talented technicians as the static set offered little for their creative imaginations. However, in saying that, all the cues were delivered on time. The lighting captured the mood perfectly, all being lit and no unwanted shadows. The sound effects were at the right level and on cue. In fact the recorded sound was so good that the, what I would assume was the “live” sound effect from crash box, was a little too quiet! This probably needed a little more crockery or nearer to the stage as it sounded a little muffled.

Costumes

A good range of costumes that help define the characters. Hospital staff looked authentic and the costumes for Leslie and Sir Willoughby added to their characters. The men dressed up as matrons looked appropriate. The policeman outfit did not seem to fit very well – and it was not up to date. Also, being sergeant, he would certainly have stripes on his jacket. I did note he had stripes on his shirt though.

Properties

All of the properties looked appropriate and relevant to location and period of the show.

Makeup

All of the makeup was very well applied and saw all the expressions under the lights.

Front of house

My wife and I are always made very welcome by all of the front of house team, being shown to our seats and the hospitality extended to the offer of drinks. I notice that the busy front of house team were equally welcoming of other audience members and delighted that this simple act is sometimes lost at societies. Well done.

Programme

The programme was included with the ticket and it contained all the relevant information with photos, biographies, cast list and advert for their next show, *Below Stairs*, a musical. The photographs were of a good quality and an eye catching cover.

(5)

I always enjoy my visits to Riverside Players because they deliver shows that plays to the strengths, with a professional approach and application that is one of the best in the area. I look forward to their summer show, a musical, which will provide new challenges that I look forward to seeing.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gordon Bird', written in a cursive style.

Gordon Bird
NODA representative
London Region, District 14