

Society : RIVERSIDE PLAYERS
Production : **OLD BOILERS**
Date : Saturday 25th June 2016
Venue : Memorial Hall, Old Windsor
Report by : Gordon Bird, NODA Representative, Area 14



Show Report

I always enjoy visiting the pleasant and warm surroundings of a Riverside Players' production so I was delighted to be invited to review their summer production, a two act comedy by Adrian Cale.

The play is set in the guest house in Blackpool which is run by Miss Bobby with help (!) from her cheap Latvian student.

The excellently constructed and superbly set stage presented the ideal backdrop for the Players production. All of the roles were very well cast and the play moved at a brisk pace, clearly well rehearsed with everyone knowing their parts, entrances, exits and lines.

MISS BOBBY (VICKI ARNOLD)

From the opening scene where the landlady dilutes the vodka bottle with water, empties the vacuum cleaner and places the peanuts back into the bowls, you know what sort of establishment this was and the type of character Miss Bobby is! Vicki maintained the air of superiority throughout, believing that all of this was beneath her and that the singing was where she should be. The early exchange with the Latvian student was very well presented; the humour was well founded and delivered perfectly. Congratulations on the accent too, which was consistently spoken throughout.

ANYA (KAT GREENAWAY)

It is always difficult to maintain an accent throughout a show but I thought Kat did an admirable job in performing a consistent east European accent. I loved her facial expressions, especially in the opening scene with all of the misunderstandings of the English words. Her movement looked completely natural and her interaction with Josh was believable.

MR WATTS (SIMON ARNOLD)

The main role of the piece was in safe hands with Simon, who excellently timed comedy and vocal delivery ensured that all of the humour hit the mark. Every line had the right weight which meant that the laughs flowed. Simon seems so relaxed on stage that his mannerisms and movement appear natural. His reaction to finding out that his ex-wives were all at the same hotel was very well presented and the on-going farce of trying to keep away from them was brilliant.

JOSH (TOM WELLER)

I have now seen Tom in a couple of performances and he just grows in confidence each time I see him. He looks very relaxed on stage and his movement natural. His rapport with Mr Watts was appropriate and his line delivery was perfect. His romantic intentions with Anya were very well

understood and presented. Tom also has very good comic understanding and this helped a first class delivery in lines and action – particularly the use of the soda syphon. His first appearance with a brochure super glued to his forehead was very amusing and again helped set out the character.

ANN (LENA VANTOL)

Lena presented a lovely performance as Ann, one of the divorcees. The banter between her and Cora was very well delivered and one could really believe their friendship. Good movement and vocal delivery ensured that this part was very well presented. The first meeting of Ted at the end of act one curtain was very well done but I thought the opening of act two you looked a little uncomfortable.

CORA (SUSAN PICKLES)

As the only single woman in the group, it was obvious that Mr Watts would make a play for her and sure enough within a few moments of them meeting that was exactly what happened. The character appeared natural and the relationship with the Ann was very well defined. The flirtation with Mr Watts in act one was equally well performed. Susan's movement around the stage appeared natural and appropriate.

FREDDIE (ROGER BLACKMAN)

This is a lovely small role and I loved the execution of the final line, superbly delivered! Roger produced a good, strong and believable accent that was very well maintained. I have seen Roger several times on stage and he always delivers believable characters and this was no exception.

KAREN (SIMRAN HOONJAN)

I have not seen Simran before but this was a wonderful performance. Good line delivery and nice inflection. Just be careful not to rush your lines as I lost some of the words as they were a little quick. Her movement was purposeful and her interaction with her friends realistic. I loved the scene when she meets her husband – excellent intonation and superb facial expressions.

GINNIE (TRISH WELLER)

This was a very well presented performance by Trish as a woman who is recently divorced from her husband and unable to accept that it's over. As with all of the cast, movement and line delivery was very well rehearsed.

DIRECTOR (SAMANTHA SOMERVILLE)

REHEARSAL ASSISTANT (SIMON ARNOLD)

Congratulations on your directing debut - as this was a very polished performance with everyone knowing exactly what they were doing. Entrances and exits were very well defined and considering the small acting space the movement looked natural and appropriate to the plot. I thought this play was very well cast and the characters were distinctive and very well defined. There was only one moment of blocking when Cora sat down and blocked Anne who was speaking at the time. But this was an isolated incident and overall the blocking was seamless. I was not sure about the additional scene for the curtain call, but it did help clear up some of the unanswered questions from the script and rounded off the show very well.

LIGHTING (ROGER LEWISTON)

The set was very well lit, giving the relevant level of lighting to an interior dining room. All of the actors were lit and I could see their faces at all times, wherever they were on stage. I could not see any unwanted shadows.

SOUND (MARK HASTINGS)

All of the sound effects were on time and at an appropriate level. The actors were amplified with microphones but these were discretely applied and the sound levels expertly handled. The “concert” at the end of the show allowed the cast to sing and the levels were once again very well handled and balanced very well with the backing tracks.

STAGE MANAGER (ALEX TAGGART)

BACKSTAGE (RICHARD ROBINSON)

This is not a busy show however the stage was very well managed by Alex and his team. All of the properties appeared to be in the right place at the beginning of each act.

COSTUMES AND PROPS (MEMBERS OF THE CAST)

All of the costumes looked appropriate to the period, location and character. I do like the attention to detail, like the guest book not being new but already containing the names and addresses of previous guests.

MAKEUP

Makeup appeared to be ably applied as I could see all the facial expressions.

SET

The set was exceptionally well constructed and very practical. It looked sturdy with all of the entrances well positioned. Considering the restrictions of space, the set allowed sufficient acting area but still provided a realistic setting of a guest house. The furnishings looked suitable for the period and location.

FRONT OF HOUSE

The front of house team is warm and attentive, as always, making myself and my partner very welcome.

PROGRAMME

The four page coloured free programme contained all the pertinent information but I did miss the biographies. The cast photographs were of a good quality and the font easy to read.

This was not a play or author that I have previously seen which added to my enjoyment of the evening. All of the actors worked well together and looked so comfortable on stage. The farcical moments were very well presented, which without a strong director, can fall into the trap of overacting. Fortunately this was not the case and this production was very smooth. This is the last play I will be reviewing and I cannot think of a better place to see my last show and would like to thank all at Riverside Players for the last five years and wish them every success for the future.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Bird'.

Gordon Bird
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