National Operatic & Dramatic Association London Region

Society : Shinfield Players

Production : Time Of My Life

Date : Thursday 21st November 2019

Venue : Shinfield Theatre

Report by : Jeanette Maskell

 Show Report

As with most Ayckbourn plays; family relationships and time lines featured greatly in this classic. I found the plot rather slow to get going and I wasn’t sure at the end whether it actually achieved anything!

This is (in my opinion) not one of his most inspiring scripts. The humour such as it was, was subtle and in short supply.

However; that said you could not take away the excellent acting and dramatic interpretation of the cast. They cleverly brought the plot to life developing their characters and the relationships therein.

**Matthew Chishick –** (Calvinu/Tuto/Aggi/Dinka/Bengie) – I have to be honest and say that I cannot remember which character was which. However I can say that each one was completely different and brilliantly portrayed complete with a stereotypical accent. There was the smiling happy go lucky one, the rather miserable “I don’t want to be here” one, I burst into serenade one, the friendly manager and the I don’t understand you one! This actor was responsible for quite a lot of the comedy and he brought this out famously. He had the audience laughing at his looks mannerisms dialogue and accent from his first entrance through every subsequent appearance.

**Philippe Duquenoy –** (Gerry Stratton) – This was a knockout performance! He has an innate acting talent which is natural and easy. His dialogue was unaffected, genuine and conversational. He had a comfortable and intuitive relationship with Laura befitting a couple that have been together for many years. I very much liked the way his character changed when he found out Laura had, had a fling with someone who turned out to be his brother.

**Barbara Richards –** (Laura Stratton) – As the selfish, self centred matriarch this actress had all the traits and attributes required to portray the character fully. She had some excellent dialogue which she delivered with clarity and emphasis. Visually she was animated and her movement reminded me greatly of Imelda Staunton. This was a near perfect performance it was such a shame that on the evening of my visit she lost her words and became a little lost and agitated.

**Mark Read –** (Glyn Stratton) – This actor portrayed the restlessness of his character from the outset. It was clear that he really did believe it when he said he would make a go of his marriage to Stephanie. However we could see by his very nature that this would not happen. His dialogue delivery was outstanding as were his facial expressions. His interaction was intuitive and spontaneous and this enhanced his relationships no end.

**Robin Slone –** (Stephanie Stratton) – I was really taken with this young lady; she had a superb character and really captured the tragedy of her marriage to Glyn. I really enjoyed her second break up with him and her subsequent desert eating frenzy. Everything about her performance was superb, acting, dialogue, visuals and movement

**Jesse Dopson –** (Adam Stratton) – This young man is to be congratulated! He produced an excellent characterisation of the favourite son meandering aimlessly from one career to another, collecting a bevy of girlfriends along the way. He had good energetic dialogue and expressive visuals. He forged first rate relationships with all involved especially his mother and Maureen.

**Lauren Boys –** (Maureen) – I would have liked this young lady to have been even more outlandish than she was. She had a strong character and her dialogue reflected this being well intoned clear and audible. Her visuals were nicely animated and her movement pleasantly fluid. She had a good rapport with Adam and interacted well with the other characters.

**Simon Trinder –** (Director) – assisted by **Gordon Bird** Simon had worked hard on characterisations and relationships between the characters. He ensured the cast understood what was expected of them meaning they produced real in depth portrayals. There were times when I felt Laura moved a little too far down stage, meaning her dialogue was directed to the audience rather than at Gerry. However I liked his staging of the two couples at the downstage tables and his positioning of the waiter. He brought out the humour (some of which was delightfully visual) at every opportunity with excellent timing ensuring the audience were able to react accordingly. He produced a nicely paced piece of theatre which provided a super evening’s entertainment.

**Karen Bird –** (Stage Manager) – There was plenty for this SM to organise. She made certain that tables were cleared and set quickly ensuring the smooth running of the action. However it was quite distracting in the final scene when they were clearing and setting the centre table which took some time especially with the swing door squeaking every few minutes.

**Tim Howling –** (Set Design) – This was a clever design with a mural of the last supper as a back drop. How very apt. I liked the practical swing door into the kitchen (though a drop of WD40 wouldn’t have gone amiss). The curtained window which was relevant to the script made a nice additional feature. **Di Capel/Natalie Clarke/Derek Lockwood/Tim Howling/Sam Turner/Graham Smith/Graham Vockins/Carol Vockins/Steve Toon** had made an excellent job in the construction making it solid and sturdy.

**Di Capel/ Natalie Clarke/Sophie Gallagher –** (Art Design) – What artwork were these girls responsible for? Programme cover and poster? The last supper mural? Whichever it was they certainly did a good job.

**Matthew Chishick** – (Lighting Design) – Lighting played a major part in keeping the action moving. The two areas down stage of the main acting area were superbly spotted and created real atmosphere. General lighting bathed the stage with warmth and depth. Operation fell to the capable hands of **Graeme Rhodes**

**Steve Townsend** – (Sound Design) – This technician had devised a good plot with excellent operation by **Steve Townsend/Phil Gowen.** There were no missed cues and the level was spot on.

**Carol Vockins** – (Costumes) – All costumes suited the character’s personality and were of the era. They were fresh and colourful adding greatly to the overall look of the production. I was pleased to see that shoes and accessories had not been overlooked and were also of the period.

**Debbie Wheeler** – (Properties) – The stage was extremely well dressed with tables and chairs that looked as though they belonged in a tardy restaurant. The china used also looked of the period. The amount of food used especially on the desert trolley was amazing and all fresh and edible. Glasses, and bottles were authentic and I was delighted to see a bottle of Mateus Rose which was extremely popular in the 1980s.

**Simon Trinder** – (Programme) – This was a simple yet effective programme; informative and well laid out. Unfortunately some of the cast photos by **Susie Williamson/Simon Trinder** were rather dark making them difficult to see. The cover was self explanatory with an underlying shadow depicting a fracture in time?

Thank you

***Jet***

Jeanette Maskell - NODA Representative - London Region - Area 13