



Society : East Berkshire Operatic Society
Production : Outside Edge
Date : June 25th, 2010
Venue : Pinewood Theatre,
Report by : Steve Bold, NODA Representative, District 14

Report

A fun character laden play with some subtle lines but also some blatant laughs scattered throughout. I always think this is a fun show for the cast because the parts are quite out there, parody extensions of character traits that we see in daily life so play such a role is fun to see the reactions of others. The star of the show here was clearly the put upon Mim or Miriam as she desperately tries to hold herself together under the constant duress and 'love you, okay' of her husband Roger. Emma Carver has done an accomplished job especially on the night I attended as she was required to fill in for an unwell cast member. Complimented by a used but white set, the cast set about their 'grudge' match with gusto and endeavour, an enjoyable show with just the odd observation on character definition and depth.

Simon Heffer, Roger

Simon handled the part of the officious but harassed Captain of the club well. His expressions throughout the performance lent themselves perfectly to this character, exasperation and incredulity at other people, alongside the fact that he was largely insensitive to the needs and goings-on of those around him, especially his wife. There was comedy in his role too, the white paint-covered glove giving Bob a 'friendly' pat on the shoulder and his subsequent expression. I would just say that he didn't quite raise the crescendo for the end and the rain, but still a good performance.

Anna McCormack, Miriam

If done right the part of Miriam is the star of the show and Anna gave us a marvelous but subtle performance. Her movement and shuffling, the way she used her arms to display her frustration were excellent little foibles. Anna held her peace of the many situations throughout the show. You could see the tension building within her as Roger continuously put her down or abused her sensibilities. A very enjoyable performance and well-developed characterization.

James Lole, Bob

James started out with bravado as Bob, strutting into the clubhouse, but his confidence soon began to ebb away as his life caught up with. There was bitterness in his voice as he complained about how things had turned out, I particularly enjoyed his drunken entrance from the pub. The pained expressions as he tried to cover himself with 'stomach problems' was also good. There were some good expressions and looks between Bob and his wife, and he delivered his lines well and seemed to understand his character and the weaknesses of that character in his relationships with women. James' chain-smoking was also very convincing in this politically correct environment.

Julian Hirst, Dennis

There was a distinct evolution of Dennis' character through the show. Julian presented us with an 'irritating oily, smarmy salesman who thinks he knows it all' at the beginning before the gradual change to 'sad insecure man who desperately seeks the approval and acceptance of his peers' towards the end. There was a wonderful smarm to the character, you could see the way he presented himself to women and their outright disgust as his presence. Julian produced a wonderful voice for the character, reminding me a little of Roy Hattersley in his parliamentary heyday. A very slick role and well played.

Kate Jeater, Maggie (Emma Carver)

It is always disappointing to put in the hours and effort for a show only to have to miss out due to unforeseen circumstances. My feelings go out to Kate Jeater that she was unable to perform on the night I saw the show, but I'm sure she would have been proud of her director for stepping in. And my goodness, what a character to step into! *Maggie* is an over-sexed, overly-protective and totally down to earth individual, it so easily could have been a clash with Miriam's character, but they seem to fit together as opposites. There were some marvelous comedy moments in the script between Maggie and Mim, well delivered and excellent timing. Well done to Emma for stepping in and bringing the character to the stage, my best wishes once again to Kate.

Tony Slevin, Kevin

It's hard to know if the relationship between Kev and Maggie is a reciprocal one or if he is put out by her smothering concern for his welfare, but he played up to it well, just occasionally letting his guard down and be genuinely affectionate with her. The interaction between the two was excellent, with his presentation of the grumpy, sulky and diminutive spin-bowler was not only very well done, but was very amusing at times especially when presenting his *raison d'être* to the attentive clubhouse audience!

Hannah Robertson, Ginnie

Hannah brought a clear disdain for Bob's little hobby as his wife Sarah. She gave him short shrift throughout with just the right amount of acid in his voice to really get under his skin. The confusion she has over his continual return to his first wife was also good. Overall a good role played with bitchiness hiding her obvious insecurity over her husband's previous relationships.

Jonathan Goodchild, Alex

Jonathan started out nicely confident as he strode into the clubhouse, but I don't think he really pulled off the pompous over the top nature of Alex. There should be a much colder more ruthless streak in him, as his overblown sense of self worth offends all before him. He should be much more harsh to Sharon, cutting her down with every comment. But in respect of Jonathan's efforts, it is down to the nature of part that this doesn't come across. It is a relatively small part and doesn't give the actor a great deal of time to build a character. Jonathan does well with what he is offered but the script holds him back from fully showing the nature of Alex.

Laura Thain, Sharon

This is also a small part with not a lot of time to build a character, but it is to the benefit of her opening line that allows Laura as Sharon to immediately set her stall out. After displaying the depth of the character with that opening line the bulk of Sharon's interaction with the audience and the other characters is mainly through expression and movement and Laura is a superb exponent of over the top expression. She does have very few lines, but her action is eye grabbing as she has been so overly dressed for the occasion, she made the most of her opportunities, verbal and non-verbal, giving us a number of gawky entrances on set, desperately looking for the toilet, before her frustration releasing tirade.

Wardrobe, Bronwyn Hodgkins

All the costumes suited their wearers very well. Bob and Dennis in their sports jackets were typical of their characters; Alex was suitably up-market in his attire, Sharon looked so perfectly out-of-place, dressed for completely the wrong sort of occasion, how much material was in that dress, and as for Maggie's 'ensemble'.... She looked every bit the part!!

Lighting & Sound, Tom Horrox, Karl King, Duncan Bruce

Light. A proper light and lampshade coming down from the ceiling and a bright setting throughout until the end as the rains came and there was a subtle dimming of the sun.

Sound. There were appropriate sounds of scattered applause, the occasional shout from the field, the thwack of leather on willow and all that.

Stage Management and Design, Frank Box, Tony Critchley

I really liked the set, it looked worn and used throughout, but with that touch that Miriam has obviously been directed to clean vigorously. One observation would be that there could have been an indication of the wall that was obviously meant to be between the verandah and the club-house interior – as the cast did occasionally walk through the 'wall' as it were. Over all, a well thought-out set, with some nice attention to detail.

Emma Carver, Director

Although this is a somewhat well known TV comedy series, it is not an easy play to stage, there are many layers to the characters as the story evolves and each secret comes out. Emma has done a marvellous job of pulling everything together, an experienced cast, a well constructed set in a confined area, she has utilized the front area and available doors to create the setting, but I do feel that there were weaknesses in one or two of the characters such as Alex and Ginnie, where they are not given the time to really flesh out their characters. This is down to the script rather than the direction, although Alex could have delivered his lines with a bit more pomposity and sneer over those around him. But, I was pleased to see that once the match got started, the score-board was maintained in a (mostly) believable fashion!

I must point out though that there were some good characterisations and interesting performances, Miriam and Dennis were particularly enjoyable, and the show was thoroughly enjoyable, but was just slightly lacking in some minor areas.