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17th March 2019

REPORT FOR:-

“Humble Boy” by Charlotte Jones

Production given by Tavonians Theatre Company

Director: Stuart Waterworth

Performance: Primraf Theatre, Callington Thursday 14th March 2019

Reviewed by: Nick Lawrence, Past President standing in for Regional Representative 3: Gareth Davies

Any observation made by the reviewer can only be based on what he sees at the performance in question. The reviewer may have received information in advance of the performance and it is inevitable that his assessment will be affected by that knowledge.

The N.O.D.A. Representative's intention is to give an objective critique of the overall production and in particular the performance viewed. It should be remembered that any review of this nature can only be objective as far as the techniques used during the performance observed. Any criticisms expressed may not have been valid at other performances, and are only made to encourage higher standards in Amateur Theatre.

It is hoped that the audience's appreciation of your efforts will have given everyone a lift and encouraged you to greater achievements in the future and that the observations made by the reviewer will prove helpful in improving future productions

Having previously experienced Tavonians on Tour and having knowledge of the play, but not having seen it before, anticipation of this production was keenly felt.

The production benefited from the wonderful facilities of the Primraf Theatre. The small, cosy auditorium gives the audience the opportunity to get fully immersed in the production and with a cleverly conceived garden set we were soon enjoying the warmth of a Summer afternoon in the Cotswolds. This was quite an achievement in itself as the March winds and rain made determined attempts to get into the theatre! A wild night was certainly calmed by being in the Humble's garden. The action was placed by a trellis supported roses, tubs of small flowers and an ornamental tree added to the essential bee-hive, an artistic apple tree and appropriate garden furniture.

Generally brightly lit, there were some subtle changes to show the passing of time and concentrate attention. Sound effects and appropriate music were smoothly included; nicely graded and in addition, rather than distracting.

Each character was appropriately dressed. From the immaculate Mrs. Humble to Felix in his late father's ill-fitting suit, the characteristics of each person were reflected in their choice of clothing. There was an effect collection of props including soup that one could almost smell and father's dusty ashes in an attractive culinary pot. As all these elements have to be transported, assembled and dismantled nightly, in different venues, it was impressive that everything seemed to fit and run smoothly.

After the cast had a quick acclimatisation in the *new* space, the enthusiastic audience was let into the auditorium full of anticipation of an entertaining evening. The Director's programme notes suggested a rather serious theme. "Felix returns from university, where he is deeply engrossed in astro-physics, to his Cotswold home for his father's funeral. There he discovers that his mother and their neighbour have long been involved in an affair and now plan to marry."

All was set for a rather sombre and torrid tale. Characters were efficiently established by the cast with the audience rapidly assimilating their various foibles.

National Operatic and Dramatic Association

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The difficult situations were carefully handled and everyone became involved in the family & neighbours' troubles. A wonderfully tense relationship between mother and son developed in time-honoured style, and the colourful neighbours brought their own confusions, greatly enjoyed by the audience. The resulting chaos was calmly observed by the gentle gardener. Somewhat surprisingly well-timed situations and beautifully articulated dialogue produced much considerable laughter as the audience enjoyed the hilarity of this dysfunctional family and its friends.

Despite the restrictions of the space, the rough and tumble of the physical humour was well played to be greeted with raucous laughter. The comic and dramatic climaxes of the scenes were delivered well with good timing and exciting variation. After all the hilarity the sympathetic ending was beautifully handled and the stillness in the auditorium at this point reflected the success of this offering.

Nicely handled direction, beautifully constructed characterisations and good diction ensured that this was a very funny and yet moving evening. There were hardly any signs that the play had not been performed for four days or that this was a different venue to previous performances: nor the wide variation in experience of the various actors. The citizens of Callington were treated to an excellent production. The company enjoyed the performance and so, naturally, did the audience.

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