National Operatic & Dramatic Association London Region

Society : Shinfield Players

Production : Harvey

Date : Wednesday 15th May 2019

Venue : Shinfield Theatre

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Report by : Jeanette Maskell

Show Report

This was a first for me only having seen the 1950 movie starring James Stewart; I was totally enamoured!

Direction was evocative and thought provoking whilst being warm and funny with the whole having good pace. The scene changes were quite long and the director skilfully ensured they were covered with some well directed business in keeping with the plot

It had been well cast with some memorable performances, hilariously affected scenes and moments of great poignancy.

**Millie Naylor –** (Myrtle Mae Simmons) – This young lady was super! She had a brilliant accent which enhanced her dialogue no end. She was delightfully self-centred and I loved the way she hoped Elwood would be run over by a truck and the way she was making arrangements to sell the house as soon as Veta decides to have Elwood committed. Her interactive dialogue with Duane was fun and well put over and visually she was energetic and animated.

**Sandra Miall –** (Veta Louise Simmons) – What a stellar performance this actress put in! Her character was perfect and she had a superb accent that was well maintained throughout. Her dialogue visuals and movement were powerful and charismatic and her comic timing impeccable. Her scene with Dr Sanderson when trying to explain Elwood’s state of mind was absolutely hilarious. I liked her display of empathy as she changed her mind about having Elwood treated to stop him seeing Harvey and interrupted the doctors before it could be carried out.

**Gordon Bird –** (Elwood P. Dowd) – This was a knockout performance and one I enjoyed immensely. This actor absolutely owned the character; he was appealingly eccentric; charming chivalrous and kind to everyone he met. I loved the way he invited complete strangers to dinner and handed out calling cards to every new person he met. His interaction with everyone on stage was impulsive and reactive which was real and intuitive. With a great accent dialogue delivery was energetic and delightfully stilted absolutely perfect for the role. His visuals were expressive open and honest; and the use of hand gestures enhanced his persona greatly. I so enjoyed his little chats with Harvey which were humorously animated.

**Yvonne Mitchell –** (Maid/Mrs Cummings/Nurse Dunphy) – Having a couple of minor characters to get stuck into this young actress made the most of what she had been given. Her first entrance being ushered into the unnamed room by the maid had been well thought through and looked natural and realistic. As Nurse Dunphy she looked good and supported Nurse Kelly famously.

**Barbara Richards –** (Mrs Ethel Chauvenet) – This minor character was so well portrayed by this actress. Her character was outgoing and garrulous and her movement complemented this perfectly. Dialogue was decisive and assertive and visuals animated and expressive. I so enjoyed her hasty retreat on being introduced to Harvey.

**Elizabeth Moorcroft –** (Ruth Kelly R.N) – I really enjoyed this young lady’s performance. Her character was believable and real and her dialogue had depth and meaning. I so enjoyed the dialogue between her and Dr Sanderson it had pace and spontaneity displaying a mutual obsession and conflict. Her scene with Elwood was impassioned and emotive; you felt by the end that she would be a more confident and assertive person.

**Jordan Emmett –** (Duane Wilson) – As the orderly at Chumley’s Rest this young actor made the most of his role. His commitment to Dr Chumley was clear for all to see and his concern when he thinks Elwood may have hurt him was most tangible. His dialogue delivery was excellent clear and audible with good inflection. I particularly liked his dialogue scene whilst flirting with Myrtle Mae.

**Tom Naylor –** (Lyman Sanderson M.D.) – This was such an eccentric characterisation; totally bonkers but I loved it. His dialogue was vivid and his visuals vital and alive. I so liked his relationship with Nurse Kelly it was obvious that he was infatuated with her although he certainly would not let her know. A lot of the verbal and visual comedy came from this young man and his great sense of comic timing ensured none of it was missed.

**Derek Lockwood –** (William R. Chumley M.D.) – I would have liked more from this actor; I felt he had more to give and could have created a fearsome character rather than a mediocre one. His dialogue delivery was inconsistent; at times it had good pace and energy but then would suddenly fade away. That said I liked his scene when he came back after drinking with Elwood and able to see Harvey his personality completely changed becoming nervy agitated and edgy.

**Melanie Sherwood –** (Betty Chumley) – I really liked this actress’s characterisation. She was so fixated with their social status and this came over famously through her dialogue. Visually she was delightfully animated and her dialogue was lively and expressive

**Brian Nixey –** (Judge Omar Gaffney) – As the family lawyer and friend this actor had a well delineated character with excellent dialogue delivery; although there was no attempt at an accent. Visually he was expressive and he moved with a natural ease.

**Karen Bird –** (E.J. Lofgren Cabby) – Having driven many people to Chumley’s Rest for treatment the cabby is in the ideal position to deliver the speech that informs Veta that the remedy which will stop Elwood seeing Harvey will take away his likeable personality. Whilst her American accent was subtle her dialogue delivery was superb and the speech conveyed with simplistic honesty. Unless I am mistaken I believe that Karen was also the maid; and although it was only a minor character she carried herself with exactly the right demeanour.

**Maggie Smith –** (Director) – What a great job Maggie had done in creating a delightfully warm and beguiling piece of theatre. Her characters had depth and purpose and she had worked on the relationships within the script. I did feel however that the pace was a little erratic and there were several occasions when the plot lost momentum mainly during the dialogue scenes involving Dr Chumley. There were some superbly frantic hilarious scenes and some lovely intimate moments. She ensured the full humour of the script was brought out at every opportunity and made the most of the visually humorous antics. I really like the way she made use of the maid to clear the table in the Dowd’s and then had the nurses come on and set it as the reception desk in Chumley’s Rest which helped to cover the scene change brilliantly. Her staging was excellent with good grouping and spacing and no upstaging or masking.

**Cate Naylor –** (Co-Director) – As co-director I’m sure Cate gave Maggie invaluable assistance with direction; they clearly make a formidable team.

**Sarah Lockwood –** (Stage Manager) – This SM certainly had her work cut out; however ably assisted by the **Crew** she ensured the changes although fairly lengthy were carried out efficiently and effectively.

**Tim Howling –** (Set Design/Construction) – The set had been extremely well constructed sturdy and robust. The Dowd residence had exactly the right look with the entrance at the back and exits off to the left one of which led to the recital and one to a room unknown.

The reception room at Chumley’s Rest was super with practical doors leading to consulting rooms treatment rooms and exit to the grounds

**Matt Chishick/Graeme Rhodes** – (Lighting) – This was an imaginative plot with some excellent mood lighting (especially when Harvey was around), and a good use of spots. General lighting was well balanced and created the perfect ambience.

**Patrick Naylor/Cate Naylor** – (Sound Operators) – I was impressed with the sound it ensured every actor could be heard at a uniform level. Sound effects were appropriate and skilfully cued.

**Lara Savory** – (Miss Tewkesbury’s song) – This was well sung and contributed to the scene famously. The sound level was pitched perfectly and it was clearly audible though unobtrusive.

**Di Capel** – (Artwork) – As I have come to expect from this artist; attention to detail was spot on. She always gets depth and dimension exactly right and her definition is flawless.

**Cate Naylor** – (Costumes) – Although these had been chosen to enhance the character’s personality I felt there was a lack of defined period. The maids and cabbies costume were appropriate as were the nurses uniforms and doctor’s coats. Elwood’s suit was perfect and just as you would imagine it should be.

**Cate Naylor/Sharon Wakefield** – (Properties) – This pairing had thought of everything; from furniture to clip boards to the portrait of Elwood and Harvey. A good job well done

**Maggie Smith/Graham G. Vockins** – (Programme) – I really liked the layout of this programme; it was interesting and informative. The font was a perfect size and easily legible adding greatly to the overall look. The colour photos by **Eilish Phillips** were unfortunately a bit hit and miss. Some were fine whilst others had quite a lot of shadowing.

Thank you

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Jeanette Maskell - NODA Representative - London Region - Area 13