National Operatic & Dramatic Association London Region

Society : Shinfield Players

Production : Farndale Avenue Macbeth

Date : Friday 16th November 2018

Venue : Shinfield Theatre

Report by : Jeanette Maskell

 Show Report

Anyone with a theatrical background would be able to relate to a lot of the events that happened during this performance; and probably found them suitably cringe worthy! However what an absolute hoot this farcical play was! There is nothing better than a good laugh to lift ones spirits; and this performance gave us belly laugh after belly laugh.

This was a fast paced energetic piece with outstanding performances from all the cast and not a weak link to be seen. The audience had the best time and left with huge smiles on their faces!

**Sian Roberts –** (Thelma/Macbeth) – As the diva of the company this young lady gave an over the top performance which was perfect for the role. Her dialogue was lively crisp and clear with impeccable diction; which enhanced her animated characterisation famously. I so enjoyed the way she stomped petulantly around the stage when things were going wrong; shouting and swearing at the rest of the cast; and upstaging and masking them in order to take centre stage at every opportunity! Her extended death was truly a sight to behold. She had great timing which added to the humour and her reactive interaction with the rest of the cast culminated in a flawless performance.

**Matt Lugg –** (George Peach) – As the adjudicator there to judge Farndale’s play as they try to make it through to the finals, this actor gave super performance. What a challenge he faced having to sit for such a long period without saying anything. However; his character was well delineated and his dialogue expressive. He really came into his own in the final scene when dressed in all his finery he delivered his nonsensical views on their performance. I really enjoyed the little ad-libs he put in especially the selfie with the audience.

**Adam Wells –** (Henry/Lady Macbeth) – What a sublime performance this young man gave! Thrust from stage hand into the role of Lady Macbeth he delivered it with a great comic touch. His body language and deadpan facial expressions added to the feeling that he was far from comfortable with the situation and this reinforced the real thrust of the show. The scene where he forgets his dialogue and lurches into the speech from Richard lll was hilarious and well received by the audience; and I could not stop laughing when he got in a pickle and kept repeating his line sending the dialogue round in circles.

**Sandra Miall –** (Mrs Reece/Lady Macduff/The Doctor) – I so enjoyed this actress’ performance she had a delightfully bustling presence; handbag permanently attached and raffle tickets ready for sale. I loved the way she (as Lady Macduff) had her bag under the chair and had to apologise when she left it behind and had to go back for it. Another memorable moment was “the letter”! As she crept on stage hiding behind the missive it caused the audience to erupt in convulsive laughter. Her condescending dialogue as she addressed the audience was perfect and her natural personality enabled her to change character at the drop of a hat.

**Linda Bostock –** (Felicity/2nd Witch/Seyton/1st Murderer/Malcolm/Ross/Gentlewoman) – This actress was profoundly hilarious in her villainy as Seyton and the 1st Murderer and was the only performer to attempt a Scottish accent which enhanced her performance as Malcolm brilliantly. She was lively energetic and flitted from character to character with comparative ease.

**Brian Nixey –** (David Plummer) – As the director who is having the worst night of his life this actor was excellent. The sheer tizzy into which he is thrown as the disaster unfolds was quite enjoyable; and I so enjoyed his moment of glory when the cast is informed that they have to finish within minutes and Thelma walks out! Taking over the lead role, he does the fastest Act 5 Scene 4 in recorded history. He rips through the flight of the thanes, Lady Macbeth’s death, ‘Tomorrow and tomorrow’, and the discovery that Birnam Wood is on the move at blistering speed, a tongue-twisting and memory-defying act! A performance that deserves an ovation of its own, particularly since I’m reasonably certain not a word of the original was left out.

**Lorraine Willis –** (Kate/3rd Witch/Macduff/Messenger/Adrian) – Having broken her ankle this accident prone actress hobbles her way throughout the performance on crutches. However after one missed cue too many she is chivvied off the stage to rather disturbing background noises and returns in a wheelchair with an arm in a sling, being pushed around by the director. She valiantly continues, managing a memorable final, virtually immobile duel with Macbeth. Dialogue and visuals were superb and added greatly to her characterisations.

**Karen Bird -** (Minnie/Banquo/Lady Macduff’s Son) – This was a humorous funny and entertaining performance. Even though she was “suffering” with a loss of voice I heard every word she said. She was delightfully animated and her movement and body language matched this perfectly. There were so many enjoyable moments. “Hold take my sword” searches for it finds she’s forgotten it and says “Hold take my broach”! When confronted with having both swords during the duel; proceeds to do a sword dance! And finally duelling with herself to the death!

**Samantha Bessant –** (Dawn/1st Witch/Porter/2nd Murderer/Duncan/Fleance) – This young lady had great stage presence and excellent comic timing. Her ability to thrash around the stage pretending she was unable see and not actually hitting anyone was outstanding.

**Maggie Smith/Caroline McArthur –** (Director/Co-Director) – What a cracking piece of creative direction this was! By getting the cast to play their roles absolutely straight Maggie ensured the humour came over brilliantly. She had worked on characterisations dialogue and timing all of which culminated in a performance where the team work positively shone. The whole was dynamic energetic with great pace and could not be faulted. Staging entrances and exits were super and flowed effortlessly. There were some excellent little touches throughout; which I have already mentioned but surely originated from Maggie and Caroline.

Well done ladies both myself and the audience so enjoyed your imaginative take on this play within a play!

**Sam Turner -** (Stage Manager) – and **Crew** This SM along with his crew kept the action flowing famously. They affected all changes when required quickly and efficiently. The moon was well managed flying in and out at precisely the right moment. This was also true of the swords that flew in from either side of the stage.

**Tim Howling –** (Set Design/Construction) – This simplistic set was ideal; I liked the back of the set with the graffiti on the flats. When it had been turned around it looked great with some nicely detailed artistry. The three archways worked well giving the feel of front stage back stage.

**Graeme Rhodes/Matt Chishick –** (Lighting) – this pair of technicians worked hard to ensure all cues happened at exactly the right moment! The mix up with the lights at the start of the performance was super and gave us a real flavour of things to come.

**Steve Townsend/Sarah Lockwood –** (Sound Operators) – sound for this performance was excellent; I heard every word from every character. The sound effects were brilliant and balanced to perfection.

**Caroline McArthur –** (Choreographer) – The routines created were simple yet effective. The witches dance with the 3rd witch in a wheelchair was cleverly conceived and really amusing.

**Carol Vockins/Chris Adams –** (Costumes) – These were great and I so liked the mix of period and modern. The Macbeth costumes were all suitable for the characters and the witches were representational with capes hats and plain black garments; made it easy to add other costumes over the top. What a super array of crowns worn by Henry. Then we had the doctor pitch up in a modern “white coat” complete with stethoscope. The very “luvvy” colours that David was dressed in were so perfect for the character. Finally I have to mention Mr. Peach’s evening gown; it was colourful and bold and clashed beautifully with his wig!

**Debbie Wheeler/Graham Smith –** (Properties) – My goodness this pair had their work cut out! There were so many props both small and large that needed to be in the right place at the right time. There were crutches a wheelchair swords chairs tables too many to mention really but all appropriate for their use.

**Maggie Smith/Graham G Vockins –** (Programme/Flyer Design) – this was a good quality well laid out programme; using a legible font of a good size. I liked the quips written by the cast as their character and then as themselves. The colour photos by **Caroline McArthur/Simon Trinder** were sharp and clear and added greatly to the overall look. The programme cover was super with a sword made up of Scottish shortbread biscuits totally unique.

**Sue Gowen/Members of SPT –** (Front of House) – This team are always so friendly and welcoming. It is an absolute pleasure visiting this venue.

Thank you

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Jeanette Maskell - NODA Representative - London Region - Area 13