



Society : New Stagers
Production : Have A Good Week Till Next Week
Date : 31st October 2014
Venue : St Anne's Church Hall
Report by : Tony Sweeney

Report

General

We experienced a world premiere of a play written and directed by Ian Pring, which drew on the familiar Saturday tea time tradition of wrestling on World of Sport from the 1960s and 1970s. Those of us who remember it were transported back in time by some familiar sounds, phrases and images which were used as the backdrop for an interesting exploration of relationships at a time very different from our own. Well cast and clearly drawing directly on the writer's passion not only for drama but for the time it was set.

A very comprehensive set of pre-show announcements not only covered the no phones and safety conventions but also served to indicate the play was about to start which was a nice touch.

Players

Amanda Clarke (Eileen) had the role of the archetypal female fan and delivered it well with the sort of enthusiastic ranting we saw every week on the show.

Paul Johnson (Kent Walton) gave a very credible impression of the very distinctive voice of wrestling. Kent had a fairly unique voice and Paul managed to get this right along with his vocal pace and distinct phraseology which added to the authenticity the play needed.

Benjamin Ellis (Ken Johnstone/George/Voices) had a number of small parts which acted as a link throughout, performing well in each.

Eamonn O'Reilly (Nick Naylor) as the nasty wrestler (the show's depiction of heroes and villains being central to the appeal) gave us a character that you were sympathetic toward despite his shortcomings. His struggles to keep all the elements of his family life together were central to the play's appeal and he delivered this aspect well.

Dominic Alan-Smith (Ronnie King) as the nicer wrestler, who in life was far from it. His movement in the ring scene was good and his depiction of a rather shallow character convincing. His almost Jekyll and Hyde persona was perfectly depicted by Dominic.

Gregor Stolz (Referee/Boxing opponent) again had two small parts which contributed well to the overall plot.

Stephanie Kendrik (Caroline) as the timid individual new to the "sport" who is taken under the wing of Eileen. A good characterisation that grew and developed as the plot progressed – this was a measured and well thought out performance.

Colin Sheenan (Man in Audience/Brian/Man in brawl) Kate Bromage (Dougie Squire's dancer/Young Mary Naylor) and Laura Parsons (Dougie Squire's dancer/Nurse/Woman in brawl) gave us a number of supporting roles and all of these reflected considerable acting skills. Kate particularly, in playing a younger version of another character incorporating all the uncertainty that would later develop.

Beky Peake (Denise Naylor) as Nick's daughter gave us a feisty and strong characterisation that was at the centre of the play's human story and did so extremely well. This was an excellent performance.

Stephen Beard (Dave Sinclair) as a young wrestler gave a good supporting performance as the partner of Denise who is both embroiled in the domestic turmoil but tempted by the newly created opportunities in the American WWF.

Sara Curnock Cook (Mary Naylor) had an interesting role in that she played Nick's wife who was in a stroke-induced coma and so only spoke once in a sort of in her head moment. It must be hard to lie just off stage for all that time and maintain the posture of an invalid.

Catriona Lawrie (Lorraine King) as the woman who comes between the wrestlers gave a well measured performance which reflected the torment the character clearly felt. She was comfortable in the role and had clearly thought it through well.

Director

Ian Pring gave us a triumph in both creating as well as directing the show. He clearly had a very clear vision on how it should be delivered and his passion for the play was plain to see. Given such a small stage and quite a variety of scenes he managed to get the feel of both the time and the intricacies of human emotion being depicted over to the audience.

Stage Management

The action moved across a range of scenarios and the set needed to be flexible to accommodate this without adversely affecting the pace of the action. At times the stage looked a little crowded but, given the constraints, it was perhaps inevitable.

Sound

The level of sound was excellent with everyone in the cast projecting well. Given this was a new play and everyone was experiencing it for the first time this was a real plus. The group have clearly geared their acting style to the space and this all added to the audience's involvement.

Lighting

The lighting was used well, especially in directing attention to both the main stage and the two sub stages which came into play at regular intervals. This needed to be well co-ordinated to ensure the flow of the plot.

Make-up and hairstyles

The make up and hairstyles for all the performers were in keeping with the time and helped define the characters.

Set Design

Given the constraints of the stage space available, the set needed to be well thought out and was. The addition of two off-stage areas gave more options and worked well.

Props

A variety of props were used well throughout. The use of period posters throughout the hall also contributed.

Costumes

The costumes were excellent, reflecting the fashions of the 1960s and 70s. They also helped place the individual characters into the social strata they belonged, which added to the impact of the performances.

Programme

A simple and very basic programme was provided free and on the seats ready for the audience. I liked the design which was in keeping with the theme of the show and it helped create the right atmosphere.

Front of house

The welcome from this group is always good, not just for me but all members of the audience. They have built up a sizable local following and perform to very full houses. Given that this was an unknown play with no previous expectations, this is perhaps a testimony to the quality of their appeal.

Tony Sweeney
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