



Be inspired by amateur theatre

Society : New Stagers
Production : Di and Viv and Rose
Date : 29th April 2016
Venue : St Anne's Church
Report by : Tony Sweeney

Show Report

General

New Stagers continue to give us strong gritty drama that encapsulates what community theatre is all about and is much appreciated by a loyal local following, which sees virtually all their shows sold out on a regular basis.

A nice but powerful three handed play exploring relationships formed at University which proved the bedrock for the rest of their lives for three very different women. Well observed and well written. This gave three very accomplished actresses the chance to explore both their considerable talents and make it relevant to us all.

An unusually long play especially given the size of the cast who must have been drained at the end of such an emotional performance. It nevertheless grabbed and held your attention throughout, drawing initially on what for many would be familiar, i.e. the experience of college life and being independent for the first time.

The first act set the scene with three very different, apparently incompatible character university students sharing a house. Much of the detail of this period was very familiar - the shopping float and its management, the adjustment to living with others with whom you may not have an emotional bond etc. Everything changes when Di is raped in the house and this alters the whole dynamic, the characters, their interactions and indeed the mood of the play in a moment.

Players

Rachel O'Reilly (Di) as a sporty lesbian, who seems to drift through college seeing it as an extended social experience, played the part well. At first strong and self confident, being very much the glue that holds the trio together, the trauma of the rape completely transformed her character and Rachel did this transformation brilliantly showing a real empathy with her character.

Ailsa Wright (Viv) as the, at first, rather frumpy and determined student who evolves and matures as the play progresses. The costume changes really reinforced this, giving a visual dimension to this evolution and indeed her place in society. The character visibly grew before our eyes and yet still carried the frailties of her younger self with her.

Orna Joseph (Rose) as a young girl freed from parental control and exploring her rampant sexuality at university, managed through some amazing body language to convince us that she was a rather flighty 20 year old. This given her actual age was amazing and she captured all the little touches that characterised her younger self through some well worked observations. A brilliant piece of character acting well crafted and well developed.

Director

Mark Stannett clearly has a real feeling for this play and delivered it with real sympathy for the characters and their situations. From the programme notes it is clear this was a real ambition and he must be pleased with the result, which was a triumph.

Stage Management

With only three players the exits and entrances were easy. There was quite a bit of work moving furniture between the scenes which was a little close to breaking up the flow, but again this was well worked balancing the need to alter the feel of the set and denote the passage of time.

Sound

A good clear and unaided sound with all three well versed in vocal projection meant everyone could follow the plot with ease. Always the mark of a good actor, vocal projection can sometimes take second place to using microphones, but not in this case.

Lighting

The lighting was used mainly to denote the beginning and end of each scene and was well worked and well coordinated with the action on stage. Again it helped set the mood of the play.

Make-Up

The make-up was subtle and, like the costumes, evolved as the characters did. I thought it was used well to give background impact.

Set Design

An interesting set based on the house the girls shared worked well even as the years rolled by and their lives evolved, providing a backdrop against which the action was played out.

Props

The props were all used well - some wobbly bowls being a case in point. The props were all to hand and managed with an almost seamless grace meaning they became part of the play with ease.

Costumes

The costumes were all excellent and seemed to evolve as the characters developed, which again showed a life experience we are all familiar with - how many of us still have clothes that were vital to us in our youth in the wardrobe? This helped give the passage of time more credibility, showing how we all change as we go through life. Again it was another way of making us reflect on our own existence through drama.

Programme

The programme was a simple sheet with the basics included. I was fascinated to read Mark's comments, which underlined his passion for the play and this also became apparent as the play progressed. For most this will be a real piece of memorabilia from an exceptional night's entertainment.

Front of House

The welcome everyone gets from the Front of House team is always good. You feel you are being invited into an inner space and are very much part of it. The loyal and regular audience members really enjoy a unique experience from the start to the finish and the welcome is a key part of it.

Tony Sweeney
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