

OTTERSHAW PLAYERS 'HABEAS CORPUS' – JUNE 2006

This was the second time I had seen 'Habeas Corpus' and I found it just as enjoyable this time around. The set was quite splendid and although the action mostly takes place indoors, the promenade in the background certainly added something to the visual enjoyment. Congratulations to all those involved in the design and building of such a professional set.

Peter Moore's direction was excellent. The play is quite at home on a much smaller stage but his groupings and action were well planned, and the side set entrances, depicting the doors within the house, served to make the stage a more intimate area rather than a large impersonal space.

Lynne Walters was very good as the cleaning lady Mrs. Swabb, who is far more knowledgeable about her employers than she ought to be, and revealed their foibles with relish, whilst busying herself with the vacuum cleaner. She also set the stage for the interior scenes whilst keeping in character. As the disillusioned, worldly and lecherous Dr. Wicksteed, Brian Inns gave a good characterisation but he tended to drop his voice at the end of the sentence so that some of his dialogue was lost. His upper-class and frustrated wife, who regretted not marrying Sir Percy, was splendidly played by Alison Byers and as their poor unfortunate hypochondriacal son Dennis, Mark Holton made an excellent stage debut.

Whilst Tim Matthews played a creditable Cannon Throbbing his portrayal was a little too dodderly and not nearly as suggestive as it might have been.

Another accomplished performance from Claire Turner who is able to take either glamorous or dowdy roles and make a success of them. She was wonderfully frumpy and totally lacking in confidence; that is until the arrival of her new bra, which did wonders for everyone!

The blustering and self-important Sir Percy was securely played by Matthew Horton, and Danny Sparkes made a perfect Lady Delia Rumpers.

In the role of her pregnant, needing a husband daughter Felicity, Nicky Breslin gave a good performance and although she was obviously older than Dennis it didn't matter as she addressed some of her remarks, tongue in cheek, to the audience.

Paul Foster had great fun as the sales representative and Dave Taylor acquitted himself well as the depressed Mr Purdue.

The accordionist, Roberto Buttaci, was a novel touch and made the dance sequence more rounded.

One particularly good scene was when Lady Rumpers told of her war time encounter and the ensuing pregnancy, with each person re-acting in character.

The lighting was super and the sound effects and music chosen were also very good.

Costumes were fine; probably only Dennis was dressed in 1970's style but the others vaguely resembled clothes from that period.

The make up for both Dennis and Sir Percy was perhaps a little exaggerated but in a way added to their characters.

Peter used some different ideas in the play and I found the fresh approach most enjoyable. It was very well acted by all those involved and I can only imagine the fun they had during rehearsals. All inhibitions must have quickly been overcome!

Your programme was nicely presented, interesting to read and I particularly liked the glossary. Whilst the background print items were very suitable, a slightly fainter print would have made it easier to read the programme.

Thank you for inviting me to see the play and for your usual kind hospitality on the evening.

E. Gloria Smith
N.O.D.A. Regional Representative