

National Operatic & Dramatic Association

Report



Society : The Richings Players

Production : The Anniversary

Date : 23/10/02

Venue : Iver Village Hall

Report by : John Draper

THE PRODUCTION

“The Anniversary” was first produced in 1966 and filmed in 1968. It is usually described as a black comedy but its underlying bite is sharper than most. The play demands a lot from the small cast and the Richings Players are to be congratulated on taking on the task. Mind you, with your pedigree, it’s no surprise

STAGING AND SET

The set was a well designed and constructed conventional box set. As the family was obviously not short of money should it have been more opulent? On the other hand the family’s inadequacies could mean that the absence of taste was just right.

LIGHTING

A very well lit stage with no missed bits or shadows. The cast were able to use all the stage and remain well lit. Set on a November evening there was no need for variation of lighting levels and I liked the use of lighting at the close of each Act.

COSTUME

Linda Lucas had done a great job providing such “in character” costumes. The audience were able to make assessments of the characters before they had spoken I especially liked Henry’s. Like all the others he looked exactly what he was.

THE CAST

TOM played by MICHAEL LUCAS was at first uncertain and nervous. The body language was weak and the language stilted. This was obviously first night nerves because as the play progressed he visibly strengthened and was at his dramatic best when angry. He was able to change mood and attitude with conviction and his stature and positioning got better and better.

He was brilliantly paired with an excellent SHIRLEY played by REBECCA WOOD. She brought a wonderful strength to the relationship with Tom and built her character marvellously. All her encounters were tailored to meet the demands of the situation and the scenes with Tom in Act three were a triumph for them both. Her range of emotions showed a strong talent and her whole performance had the stamp of justifiable confidence.

HENRY was played by PHIL MISON to perfection and his performance as a clothes line transvestite with such a hang dog expression was brilliant. And the way in which he made the most of his humorous lines was spot on. And yet like all the brothers he could sometimes stand his ground when called upon. His characterisation never slipped for a moment.

TERRY was a character of contrasts beautifully played by KIRK WOOTTON. At first he seemed to be too insipid but this was not so, and although some of his earlier moves were a bit strained, he grew into the part wonderfully. He was brilliant at showing how weak he was but “the worm turned” with a vengeance.

LINDA BAINBRIDGE took the part of KAREN by the scruff of the neck and made a huge success of it. She wore her feelings like she wore her skirt:- not hiding a lot. But as well as the brassy bits she could change emotion with great impact. She showed strength mingled with compassion and warmth especially in the scene with Shirley. Her final exit was magnificent.

ALISON PHILLIPS struggled with the leading role. Her struggles were made worse because she didn't know her lines which put more strain on her and the rest of the cast. It is probably because of her lack of lines that she was unable to attain the confidence needed to interpret the role correctly. She didn't have the “cutting edge” needed to make Mum really unpleasant. She wasn't able to portray the underlying menace. The struggle for words caused out of character “fiddling” which was a distraction and with every prompt her distress was palpable and drove her further out of character. Which is why Alison deserves great credit for soldiering on. It must have taken a lot of courage to come out for Acts two and three.

She had great support from her colleagues but this role was “a part too far”. I am sure however that, if Alison can get confident with her lines, her remaining performances will be 100% better.

DIRECTION

Adrian Uzzell's direction was rather pushed off course by the problems but it was obvious that he had a firm grasp of what was needed and the characters responded well. The entrances and moves were well executed and the cast reacted splendidly with each other. I'm sure a few more rehearsals would have solved the problems.

FRONT OF HOUSE

Thank you for a warm and friendly welcome. I'm pleased to hear the raffle is just for the one night because I don't think they are appropriate. We were in South London not Iver. I wish you well for the rest of the week and look forward to my next visit.

John C. Draper, NODA Rep, October 2002