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Society : Potters Bar Theatre Company
Production : Ladies Day
Date : 14th February 2018
Venue : Tilbury Hall Theatre
Report by : Gillianne Morris-Monk

Show Report

Thank you for asking me to review your production of 'Ladies Day'. This is such a lovely play about four ordinary women working as fish filleters and packers in a fish plant in Hull, who end up having an extraordinary experience when Royal Ascot is held at York and they decide at the last minute to have a day out.

From the opening music we were entertained as Shelley and Linda are seen getting ready for work and then arriving with the others and setting up the stage as the fish plant.

The set, put together by the Company and stage managed by **Brian Hamshere** and his team was cleverly planned for this small stage with the performers setting up each scene to the linking music whilst also changing their costumes, in such a way that it all became part of the action. The contrast between the fish plant and the elegance of the racecourse was achieved simply but convincingly.

Props – **Catherine Little, Gary Colledge and Linda Williamson.**

The team are to be congratulated on the sheer quantity of props for the fish plant. Instead of just providing a table and a few fish as many company's do, the stage was full of packing boxes, fish, implements, latex gloves etc to depict a busy work place. In fact, the reality of the scenes meant that I began to imagine I could smell the fish!

Costumes by the Costume Store and the cast and very ably managed by **Jenny College** really helped the reality of the piece, with each character so perfectly costumed to reflect their personalities. Good attention to detail with accessories.

Lighting and Sound Design and Operation by **Cameron Biggs** was on the whole very good. There was a small problem with lighting Shelley's face during the opening music but as she is set on the auditorium floor and there are limitations to the lighting at this venue I think you did well to light the area at all. Very good choices of music cued efficiently and at a good level.

Director **Michelle Williams** assisted by **Gary Colledge** are to be congratulated on this excellent piece of theatre. It is a director's dream to be able to cast the ideal actor for each role and this is what happened for this production. Everyone's character was different and I could not imagine anyone playing any of the parts as well or better than this line-up. Even the smaller roles were up to the standard of the four main characters. What a joy when everything falls into place. Everyone maintained their accents very well which I am sure is due to some hard work at rehearsals to be able

to achieve that so naturally. The nature of the piece does call for the actors to often be very static, in a line with very little distracting movement but these actors kept it interesting by maintaining their characters so well and by their reactions to other people's dialogue.

Jan – Catherine Little

This experienced actor never disappoints. On this occasion, playing a single mum whose life revolves around her daughter. She has to be strong with no time to think about herself, down to earth and not particularly glamorous. It becomes second nature to her to mother Linda, her young work colleague and the interaction between them was very telling. Catherine was completely immersed in her character. The scene with Pearl when she learns about Pearl's secret affair was handled beautifully. I loved the disconsolate dragging off of the food bag when exiting upset at the end of Act 1. Brilliant performance when drunk in Act 2 – very natural and not taken over the top, this had to be maintained for a long time. Well done Catherine.

Linda – Ashlea Wales

What a charming character. We learn about her doubts and fears and her relationship with her inadequate, sponging mother. The scene when she is talking about her mother was very moving. Ashlea played this character really well, maintaining her gentleness and not letting Linda be overshadowed by the stronger characters. Nice reactions to the other ladies with excellent use of body language and facial expression, especially when listening to Patrick's race. The scene with Patrick was so endearing and beautifully handled.

Shelley – Sharon Lottari

What a wonderful over-the-top character played by this very talented performer. Brash, sexy, no holds barred. Sharon had fabulous body language with a lovely tottering walk in her heels. Reactions to the other characters was spot on, even when she had nothing to say (rare for Shelley!). Excellent comedy timing and use of her very expressive face especially when making up to Jim and playing to the TV camera.

Pearl – Claire Fisher

A confident character, Pearl is more sophisticated than the others and is a lovely foil to tarty Shelley. A very accomplished performance, keeping everyone together and then letting us see the inner turmoil of her affair. The scene telling Jan her secret was very well done, a powerful contrast to the fun and excitement of the day at the races. Very good interaction with the other characters especially the ladies and particularly moving in the scene with Barry.

Joe and Fred – Colin Ricardo

It is with eager anticipation that I always wait to see what cameo character(s) Colin will be playing each time and on this occasion he excelled himself. Both characters were given different interpretations and held their own with the strong female characters. Colin even managed to entertain me with the precarious rolling up of the carpet in the scene change!

Jim, Kevin and Barry – **Roger Huggins**

These three roles were so different that I almost forgot that they were played by one actor. From the TV sports presenter with an eye for the ladies, to the drunk and then finally the tragic appearance of Barry, Roger gave such a definite character and strong performance for each, working well with the ladies. The final scene with Pearl was very touching and was sympathetically and emotionally played with careful control. A beautiful scene from both Roger and Claire.

Patrick – **Roman Crowther**

This may have been a small role but this young actor certainly made an impact as the jockey. The Irish accent was well maintained and the long scene telling Linda about racing was enthralling, with Linda's facial reactions enhancing the narrative. Roman had excellent diction and projection with good comedy timing using light and shade. The relationship with Linda was very sweet, from the chance encounter to the growing empathy between them. I look forward to seeing further performances from Roman in the future.

I really enjoyed this play and the excellent performances. Everyone is to be congratulated.

Best wishes

Gilli Morris-Monk
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