

FOOTLIGHTS

The Newsletter for Barton Theatre Company

Issue 24: April 2013

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1. EDITORIAL

Welcome, once more to Footlights. Hope all of you had a pleasant Easter.

This April edition is slightly delayed as the first weekend of the month, (my self-imposed deadline) happened over Easter. Like many people, Easter is one of those occasions I tend to spend with the family.

I also managed to catch up with some friends with whom I saw a wonderful exhibition at the British Museum called Ice Age Art. It's a display of some of the oldest pieces of human art; some pieces are over 40,000 years old. Doing a full review would probably be self-indulgent in a drama society newsletter so I'll restrict myself to the plug and to pointing you at

the British Museum website

(http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/exhibitions/ice_age_art.aspx).

Back to the newsletter and we do have a review of the latest Smith's Bite Size theatre, in which several of Barton's members were involved. Please forgive the slightly impersonal nature of the review but this time around it wasn't written just for this newsletter; there's the chance it may appear somewhere else too. Fingers crossed.

Of course there is the usual bit of news (a small bit), quiz and those Dates for your Diary

Andrew Nevill (Editor)

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2. IRON

Rehearsals for our latest production, Iron are well underway. I went down to St Mike's just before Easter to be nosy and see what was going on.

I saw all of the actors working extremely hard and some really interesting things were happening in the rehearsal room.

This gives me the impression of being a different play to some we've done. It's only got four roles and in most scenes there only seem to be two people. It's a very intimate play and so the rehearsals are intimate too with Elaine McCann frequently giving direction one-on-one or at most one-on-two.

The actors seemed to be enjoying all the personal attention but I have no doubt, they're also finding it challenging. Elaine doesn't miss much anyway. When you're

the only person she's watching, she's not going to miss *anything*!

Iron will be performed at the Salford Arts Theatre from 13 May

3. REVIEW: ACTS OF CHARITY

Smith's Restaurant, 21 March 2013

The latest presentation in Smiths' popular Bite Size Theatre, wherein you enjoy a meal in the restaurant followed by a performance downstairs, was something different and a bit special. Normally it's just one play. This time there were three. And they were all brand new!

Six different writers were given six different objects purchased from a local charity shop for under two quid and they all came up with a new piece of writing. The results played out over two nights at Smiths

The Wednesday night which presented the first three plays sold out before I could get a ticket so I only got to see the second set of three on the Thursday. However, to be honest, it was the Thursday I most wanted to see as a number of fellow members of Barton Theatre Company were involved in the plays being performed.

First up was 'Viv and Dee'. The eponymous protagonists were two seasoned demonstrators who've been protesting all their lives. Now ironically Dee's own body is protesting about its age. Anne Neville's powerful and poignant script made good use of humour to highlight the fear and powerlessness felt by those growing old and in particular dementia and memory loss. Having recently visited an elderly relative, I can attest to the play's all too accurate observations about the effects on the sufferer and on those around them. However, it was never too bleak as the humour also served to lighten the mood.

Val Ridings as Dee gave a strong and convincing performance as the aging demonstrator determined to go out raging against the dying of the light. And against the shameful politics of how we care for our elderly.

Jenny Hayes as Viv was engaging, sympathetic and at one point heart-breaking, as she described how she too had started to forget things. Both leads gave solid support to their co-actor and in so doing both of them shone.

Last, but certainly not least was Iris Sharples as Shirley. Her dotty dementia sufferer was played comically. She stole the show with the single line 'pink knicker lady' but beneath the humorous portrayal was rather more than a grain of truth.

Next we had Dave Jones's 'Forever Changes'. Eleanor's husband has died and the police are suspicious so Eleanor has been brought in for interview. The well written script pulls you in as Eleanor unfolds her tale making you wonder just what happened. The slow revelation of domestic violence is wholly convincing. One of the things that does this is the relating of tiny inconsequential details, the things that someone in shock might grasp onto to as you can't really believe the big thing has happened.

Much of this was down to Carole McGillivray as Eleanor who gave the performance of the night. She was utterly convincing. As the play started she was wringing her hands, her face drawn. She looked truly nervous and scared. She was entirely believable as a victim who is finally hit once too often. Her retelling of how she finally fought back and of the consequences is matter of fact. It's as if she is trying to rationalise the story for herself as well as for the listening police detective.

That detective, DS Summerscales, was played sympathetically by David Milne. I thought at first he was being a bit too sympathetic and could have played the role with a bit more authority. However, the revelation that Summerscales' own father was also violent showed that this was the right choice.

The play was mostly static; we were listening in on a police interview after all. You usually put movement in a play to give it energy, to keep it interesting and stop the audience from getting bored. However, the actors' performances were such that the energy dropped only occasionally. Even without movement this had me nailed to my seat!

The final play of the night was Rob Johnston's 'The Human Touch'; a comedy about a terminally ill disabled man, David and his carer, Jake. However with the revelation that Jake's developed a phobia of crowded spaces (agoraphobia for the curious, which included me), he may be the one who needs the care.

On the surface, this doesn't sound like a very comic situation but the audience, who laughed loud and long banished any doubts about that. The humour here is of the midnight black variety, the sort of humour that you would actually use to cope with and get through day-by-day the things these characters face. In this way the humour both lightens the piece yet makes it believable and realistic

Darren Scott as David was obviously having fun as the crusty, ill-tempered, rude invalid. He should have been thoroughly unpleasant and unlikeable. But Darren's performance made us laugh at, and as the action unfolded, with David so we couldn't help but like him.

Lane Paul Stewart as Jake played the put-upon, frustrated carer perfectly. Always sympathetic, sometimes vulnerable, especially when admitting to his phobia induced anxiety attacks, he made an excellent foil for David's satire. Although, with much of this being barbed put-downs aimed at him, perhaps the right word here is victim.

When introducing the play, the writer stated that this was a scene from a full length play still in development. On the basis of this, I'll be first in the queue for tickets for the finished production.

Like me, you may have noticed a theme. All three pieces dealt with subjects we don't like talking about - old age, dementia, spousal abuse, terminal illness, phobia and disability. I felt sure that there had been some very clever scheduling. But no! Elaine McCann, who organised the show, asserted that the only information she had was the synopses for the publicity material, which didn't mention any of the above. She was as surprised as the audience.

So three random objects and three different writers produce three assorted plays with, coincidentally, one theme. The plays by themselves were all excellent. Combined and enhanced by their serendipitous extra link, they made for the best Bite Size Theatre yet.

4. QUIZ

For some time I've wanted to do an anagram quiz. However, I am terrible at anagrams, not just solving them but making them up too. Then I found an Anagram Generator on the Internet (well, actually I found several) and so this month's quiz happened.

It's simple. Below are five plays all in anagram form. You just have to unscramble the anagram and name the play. To help you the author's name is shown in brackets next to the anagram.

Answers as always at the end of the newsletter

1. Fanatic Thoron Too (Tennessee Williams)
2. Thrill Evil Desolate Affection (Jim Cartwright)
3. Satanize Perfect Phone (Gilbert & Sullivan)
4. Twit If Good Groan (Samuel Beckett)
5. I Lech Aghast (Harold Pinter)

5. DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Barton Theatre Company:

Iron

Rehearsals: Monday & Thursday, 7:45, St Michaels Community Centre.

Performance: 13-18 May 2013, Salford Arts Theatre

Pantomime: The Babes in the Woods

Performance: 1-8 December 2013. Salford Arts Theatre

Smith's Bite Size Theatre

Crow of Two Theatre Company present

Volga Olga's Night of Russian Culture

Three reworked Chekov comic shorts

8 May 2013

See website for further details

Smith's Restaurant

1-3 Church Road

Eccles

Manchester

M30 0DL

Bookings: 0161 788 7343

<http://www.smithsrestaurant.net/>

Edgefold Players

Outside Edge

Friday 3 – Saturday 4 April 2013, 7:30pm

Walkden Methodist Church

Manchester Road East

Walkden

Bookings: 0161702 8708

Email: edgefoldplayers@yahoo.co.uk

Web:

<http://edgefoldplayers.wix.com/edgefoldplayers>

Salford Arts Theatre:

The Condition of the Working Class

(Film Screening)

Friday 5 April, 7:30pm

£3.00

Harold Pinter One Act Double Bill:

The Dumb Waiter and A Slight Ache

***STOP PRESS* A Slight Ache directed by Barton regular David Milne**

17- 20 April 2013, 7.00pm

£7.00, £6.00 (concession)

Salford Arts Theatre

Kemsing Walk

Off Liverpool St

Salford

M5 4BS

Bookings: Tel: 0161 925 0111

<http://salfordartstheatre.com>

The Lowry

Listings:

<http://www.thelowry.com/events/theatre-shows>

The Lowry

Pier 8

Salford Quays

M50 3AZ

Bookings: Tel: 0843 208 6000

Fax: 0161 876 2001

Email: info@thelowry.com

Web:

<https://tickets.thelowry.com/Online/default.asp>

Palace Theatre:

The Lion King

31 January – 20 April 2013

Evenings 7:30pm, Matinees (Wed & Sat)

2:30pm

Hormonal Housewives

24 April 2013, 7:30pm

£19.00 - £21:00

Halfway to Paradise: The Billy Fury Story

25 April 2013, 7.30pm

£20.00 - £21.00

Palace Theatre

Oxford Street

Manchester
M1 6FT

Opera House

Listings:

<http://www.atgtickets.com/venues/opera-house-manchester/>

Click on the Calendar link

Opera House
3 Quay Street
Manchester
M3 3HP

Bookings (Palace & Opera House)
Palace Theatre Box Office – address above
Web: <http://www.atgtickets.com/>

Royal Exchange Theatre

Listings:

<http://www.royalexchange.co.uk/page.aspx?page=453>

Royal Exchange Theatre
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7DH

Bookings: In person at Box Office above

Tel: 0161 8339833

Fax 0161 615 6696

In person: 11.00am - 5.00pm

Email: box.office@royalexchange.co.uk

Web:

www.royalexchange.co.uk/bookonline

5. THE FINAL CURTAIN

That's all for this edition of Footlights. We will be back again next month.

Contributions: Always welcome. Please submit to the email address below. You will receive full ~~blame~~ credit for anything used in the newsletter.

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Quiz Answers:

1. Cat On A Hot Tin Roof
2. The Rise and Fall of Little Voice

3. The Pirates of Penzance
4. Waiting For Godot
5. A Slight Ache

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Barton Theatre Company Committee

Chair: Brian Cogswill, Treasurer: Elaine Hayton, Secretary: Andrew Nevill

Officers: Joan Breen, Beverley Greenhalgh, David Milne, Janet Johnston, Val Ridings

Web: <http://www.bartontheatre.co.uk>

All opinions are those of the author and not necessarily those of Barton Theatre Company, its associates and affiliates

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