



Society : Quince Players  
Production : **THE VICAR OF DIBLEY**  
Date : Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2014  
Venue : Cordes Hall, Sunninghill  
Report by : Gordon Bird, NODA Representative, Area 14

## Report

I was delighted to be invited to watch Quince Players production of *The Vicar of Dibley*. The stage show is based on a few of episodes of the popular television series and cleverly joins the individual programmes to produce a two act show.

The challenge of taking such a popular show and producing it on stage is that the audience expect a replica of their favourite characters. This presents a problem for the actor – do you mimic the well known characters that have been so successfully presented by those who appeared on the TV show or do you risk performing your own characterisation?

The medium of television can allow static scenes to become quite active by using different camera angles which makes the scenes interesting. The staging of this show mainly takes place either in the parish council meetings or the vicar's home, both presenting restrictive movement.

Quince Players production was very well cast with some excellent individual performances and I was pleased that many opted to introduce their own understanding of the characters. Although the dialogue was slick with excellent cue bit, I felt many of the scenes lacked energy owing to the restrictive settings.

### **ROBIN NEWELL (David Horton)**

Robin presented a very good interpretation of the Parish council leader David Horton. He was convincing with his pompous statements but also expertly showed a deeper understanding of his caring side with the final word of the show, "stay". I liked the way he played the character his way, and whether it was in the script or his interpretation of the role, he did not seem as annoyingly opinionated as I remember.

### **TRACY WARREN (Geraldine Granger)**

This was a large part to fill (if you excuse the pun) that had Tracy putting her spin on our favourite TV vicar. Unlike some productions I have seen, she did not bow to any preconceptions and opt to look like Dawn French who made the TV role so popular, but instead, kept her own image – which worked very well indeed. Overall Tracy delivered a believable characterisation, with excellent line delivery. I would have liked, however, if you looked at those who were on stage with you rather than deliver out front. Your volume was clearly fine as I heard every word you said. Having eye contact with those on stage with you would have created more intimacy to the scenes (I particularly noted those scenes in the vicarage with Alice and later, with David). Well done on creating your own version of this role to good effect.

### **JAMES INNES (Hugo Horton)**

What a lovely character part – playing the village idiot who has a romantic liking for Alice. I read that owing to work commitment this could be James's last appearance for while which would be shame, as I thought he portrayed this role extremely well.

**LUCY HEATH (Alice Tinker)**

I loved Lucy's version of Alice Tinker, different from Emma Chamber's characterisation. Lucy played it as a dumb blond who is away with the fairies and this worked very well indeed. It is a brave decision to try something different from people's expectations but when it is played with such conviction and skill then it can be rewarding. Well done.

**EVELYN SOMERVILLE (Letitia Cropley)**

Evelyn certainly ensured the character of Letitia, who bakes the most obscure and disgusting recipes, was very well portrayed. With her constantly knitting she established the character very well and her eager cooking "experiments" ensured that we kept laughing. Like all the performers in this play, her diction and delivery was perfect, I heard every word that was spoken.

**SIMON HURRY (Jim Trott)**

Simon presented an impressive performance as Jim Trott, the indecisive local parishioner. I loved the best man speech (knowing me, knowing you) which was hilarious. Simon picked up all the mannerisms of the character, including how he sat. From the opening scene he did not have to speak as we all knew exactly who he was playing.

**NICK TEALE (Frank Pickle)**

As with other members of the cast, Nick also presented an impressive performance, his role was clearly Frank Pickle, who is very exact at everything he does. I noticed straight from the opening scene which character he was performing, by how he sat and what he was wearing.

**RORY O' CONNOR (Owen Newitt)**

I thought Rory's performance of Owen was excellently observed. My only criticism is that it was based very much on Roger Lloyd Pack's interpretation of this character. However, Rory delivered the lines with excellent weight that ensured good comedic affect. His proposal scene was very well done – superbly unromantic and delivered perfectly in character. The accent was sustained throughout. This was a very believable and enjoyable performance by a first class performer.

**Children (NINA HUMPHREY, AMELIE BARKER, FREDDIE COUGHLIN, JUDE GUNNER & FLORENCE COUGHLIN)**

Well done to all these young performers who interacted with the cast and appeared in the wedding scene. Your volume was very good, considering your ages. This is rare in the modern age when youngsters seem to rely on amplified assistance. One thing to be aware of, is that you need to look at who you talking to and cheat slightly and speak out. This will certainly come with more experience and gives the scenes more realism. Well done to all of you on your performances.

**Director (MARK HOLLIDAY)**

Well done on performing a difficult play to stage. The constraints of a village hall meeting were met by having some people sitting in different positions and having people stand at certain points – but it was always going to be a problem keeping the pace and interest going. Watching a group of people sitting around a table is not the most interesting set at the best of times. I thought all the parts were exceptionally well cast and it was brave (but wholly justified) not to try and replicate the TV programme and cast "look-a-likes". Movement, entrances and exits were on the whole very well rehearsed.

**Technical Director (PETER FITZWATER)**

I thought all the technical aspects were very well designed, the lighting plot alternating between the two parts of the stage (one representing the village hall, the other, the inside of the vicarage) worked very well. The transformation into the church was smoothly accomplished and I liked the use of simple gobo for the stained glass church window. The use of the theme music and other choral songs helped to determine the setting.

**Stage Manager (GEMMA SWAISLAND)**

The stage was very well managed on the afternoon I watched this show with no obvious glitches and all effects appearing on cue.

**Backstage Crew & Properties**

All the properties seemed appropriate to the time, place and period. One thing to note using properties – the suitcases were obviously empty, and taking consideration of H&S issues, it would have been better to have seen the suitcases having more weight.

**Lighting & Sound (ALISON SHARPE & JULIE VOICE)**

I thought the lighting and sound were delivered perfectly throughout this production. It was quite busy, with several scenes to each act, and having to light different parts of the stage. I thought the scene change music leading into the wedding could have gone on longer as there was a long pause before the scene started – but that is a small point. I loved the music that was provided by **DENNIS GOLDING** as this added an element of realism to the production.

**Wardrobe Mistress (DIANE GOSDEN)**

Congratulations to Diane for finding and fitting all the cast with appropriate costumes. All looked absolutely right to their characters. Those jumpers and the wedding dress were excellent, fitting the characters perfectly!

**Set**

The stage was extended out down stage left to accommodate the multiple settings. This did not impede any sight lines but ensured the two areas were very well identifiable. The transformation to the church scene was imaginatively and simply designed, using gold tabs, the cyclorama and the use of gobo lighting for the church window. The stage properties were appropriately decorated with the parish council meeting room and the interior of the vicarage.

**Programme**

I do enjoy the quality and substance of Quince Players programmes. They are of a very high standard indeed – the legible font being easy to read, the cast biographies interesting with excellent photographs. The twenty page colour A5 sized programme offered excellent value at £1.50.

**Front of House**

The front of house team was courteous, warm and efficient as always. Unlike other societies I visit, I had to pay for my programme which is usually delivered complimentary. I don't mind as I do like to support the societies I visit and it ensured that I resisted the temptation for the ice cream that was on sale during the interval.

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Once again Quince Players produced an enjoyable play that was very well acted by a disciplined cast. I thoroughly enjoyed my trip back to "The Vicar of Dibley" and look forward to the Players productions later in the year.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gordon Bird', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Gordon Bird**  
***NODA representative***  
***London Region, District 14***