



Be inspired by amateur theatre

Society : Quince Players
Production : **YES, PRIME MINISTER**
Date : Saturday 16th May 2015
Venue : Cordes Hall, Sunninghill
Report by : Gordon Bird, NODA Representative, Area 14

Show Report

I was very pleased to be invited to watch Quince Players latest production, Yes Prime Minister, a show based on a popular television series that I watched when I was younger.

The 1970s television series written by Antony Jay and Jonathan Lynn was made into a successful play in 2010 (and updated to involve the political situation of a coalition parliament). The timing of this production coincided a week after the latest general election and hopefully that meant an increase of ticket sales for the society.

Quince Players production used some modern technology (the use of a video screen) that made the production a little more accessible and allowed for some different theatrical effects. The set was once again excellently furnished with good oak panelled walls that immediately gave the impression of one of the rooms at Chequers. The production was very well cast and all of the actors performed a very well rehearsed show and managed the very verbal dexterity with accomplished ease.

SIMONE CHESTER (**EVELYN SOMERVILLE**)

Although Evelyn the majority of her time was “on camera” and not necessarily on stage, she still presented a believable characterisation of the television reporter. Good diction throughout and all the necessary facial expressions.

SIR HUMPHREY APPELBY (**QUILLER REES**)

What an excellent performance by Quiller as the cabinet secretary made so famous by Nigel Hawthorne in the television series. Quiller delivered all of the verbal passages with unnerving dexterity, and deserved his two rounds of applause from the audience. His characterisation could not be faulted – expressing all of Sir Humphrey’s cunning plans and devious methods with ease. I enjoyed the fact it was Quiller’s own interpretation of Sir Humphrey rather than mimic Nigel Hawthorne’s part. Congratulations on very well performed part!

BERNARD WOOLLEY (**TOBY ADAMSON**)

This was another very good performance – understanding and delivery the comic one liners with excellent timing. Diction, movement and character were all spot on! As with all the performers, cues were accurately executed and the lines and gags flowed effortlessly. A very convincing performance – well done!

JIM HACKER (SIMON HEFFER)

I was very surprised to read that Simon had to step in for this role at short notice because you would not have known – such was the polished delivery. The cue bite was particularly sharp, and on a very wordy play, this is very important. Simon's characterisation as the hapless prime minister was very well observed, delivering the touches of mischief very well. Movement was very naturalistic – each move seemed to have a clear purpose. His volume and diction was very well delivered too.

CLAIRE SUTTON (ANNE ROBINSON)

A lovely foil to Sir Humphrey! Anne's performance of the special policy advisor was very well delivered. There were some nice touches of humour and, as with the rest of the cast, very good cue pick-up and delivery of lines. Good, clear and precise diction enabled every word to be heard. Good natural movement too. Well done.

KUMRANISTAN AMBASSADOR (YM UROMISH)

A nice character role! Looking totally in command of the predicament, he portrayed a convincing part. Good accent, not so overpowering that you could not understand what was being said.

JEREMY BURNHAM (SIMON HURRY)

Looked, sounded and had all the mannerisms of an important official from the broadcasting company. Simon's reactions, when being manipulated by the Prime Minister, were very well portrayed.

BBC CAMERAMAN (JOHN MORRIS)

This was a small role that was delivered with conviction by John.

DIRECTOR (JENNY BROWN)

Considering the show had to recast the part of Jim Hacker (owing to illness) it would have been excusable if there were some under rehearsed moments yet, this production had good pace and excellent cue pick-up and delivery. Simon did an excellent job as Jim Hacker and performed the role so well that he complimented the cast very well indeed. The movement around the stage was convincing and purposeful and I was pleased the raised area by the desk was not over used, instead, keeping the action down stage on the chairs. I was also pleased that thought had been given to the use of the chairs as all were used. The moments of Sir Humphrey's entrance in the blackout and the synchronised movements on the revelation of the requirement of three call girls was very well rehearsed and effective.

STAGE MANAGER (KEN LONG)

The stage seemed well set from the off with all properties in place and scene changes were performed promptly and without any distraction. All of the cues appeared to be delivered on time.

This was a very well managed production. I did notice that the “civil service report”, in the green folder, was still on the table for the visit of the director general, and wondered if that should have been moved earlier?

SET DESIGN (ALLISON SHARPE & KATHRYN HARRIS)

The set looked like the interior room of chequers and the panelling looked authentic. The raised platform at the back of the stage meant the desk could be elevated and offered a contrasting acting area. But as it was set quite far back I was pleased it was not over used. The doors at the back and stage right were practical and I liked the yellow drapes stage left.

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR (PETER FITZWATER)

The addition of the tele-visuals added to the overall effectiveness of the production. The scenes were clear and realistic and at a good volume. The graphics for the opening scenes in act one and two were of a very high quality and in keeping with the original television show. The news reader and the interview were well lit and the sound levels just right. Changes of camera angles for the interview made the scene interesting, although the authenticity had to be questioned as there was only one camera on stage.

LIGHTING (PETER FITZWATER)

All of the stage was clearly lit with no obvious or unwanted shadows. It gave the feel of an internal room set in the evening. The cues for the black out and the lighting effects were executed promptly.

SOUND (CHRIS EVA & ALLISON SHARPE)

The sound effects were executed on cue but thought they lacked some authenticity. The phone was clearly a bell which was not realistic. It would have been better as a SXF over the speakers or from the wings.

PROPERTIES (MELANIE TRAPNELL & WENDY SAINER)

Overall the properties looked appropriate to the location. The ministers boxes looked realistic and I was pleased to see that bottles and glasses had liquid! The whisky had a good colour to it but the “bubbly” at the end looked very clear, more like fizzy water than a bubbly wine and thought this should have been a darker colour – perhaps using fizzy apple juice? I was not sure, but the telephone on the table did not seem to have a lead? The flags in front of the window added interest to the scene and I particularly liked the globe, which appeared to match the location perfectly.

COSTUME (DIANNE GOSDEN & HEATHER KING)

All of the costumes were appropriate to the characters and seemed to fit and looked clean and well pressed. The costume changes for act 2 scene 2, to denote the change of time, were very promptly executed. The Ambassadors outfit looked very good and matched the character very well indeed.

MAKEUP

Makeup was generally applied very well although would liked to have seen a little more colour applied to Simon Heffer (as Jim Hacker) as looked a little grey under the lights.

FRONT OF HOUSE

Once again my wife and I were warmly greeted by the front of house team who looked very smart and conducted their roles with efficiency.

PROGRAMME

The programmes were free and therefore offered excellent value. The quality of the programme was once again of a very high quality and contained an interesting article about the Magna Carta. Interesting cast biographies were accompanied with good quality photographs.

I enjoyed this production that had me laughing aloud throughout. It was very well rehearsed, ran at a good pace with some excellent individual performance. I am looking forward to the very different show in the autumn.



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