

## National Operatic & Dramatic Association London Region

Society : Quince Players  
Production : 'Allo 'Allo  
Date : Friday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2022  
Venue : Cordes Hall  
Report by : Nick Humby

### Show Report

#### Overall Production Impression

The Eighties hit TV sitcom 'Allo 'Allo presents amateur societies with many challenges to bring to the stage in the 2020's but Quince Players rise admirably to meet that challenge in a production delayed by Covid. Sixteen scenes covering six locations, ten male roles and just five female ones whose characters the audience are very familiar with, and a script littered full of racial and gender stereotypes with lots of saucy adult innuendo. It required the cast to throw themselves into the farcical mayhem with full unrestrained commitment and precise comic timing in the delivery of lines and reaction to them. The director successfully got her cast of thirteen to play it full on for laughs. The casting of a male actor in drag as Helga Geerhart was an inspired idea to add to the comedy without turning it into pantomime.

The use of the auditorium to set some of the smaller scenes helped maintain the pace and offered variation in the settings and the costumes were excellent throughout reflecting the original TV series . The Cockatoo in a cage was a critical and wonderfully effective prop creating some of the best business of the production.

This is a show in which the cast must have as much fun playing the parts as the audience have watching it. It's hard to replicate the wonderful ensemble performances of the original TV show but Quince Players made a good attempt at recreating them on stage.



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## Cast

**Robin Newell** and **Sue Bish** lead the confusion as the café proprietors Rene and Edith respectively. They captured the essence of the original without ever doing an impression. Rene's conspiratorial conversations with the audience were very well handled and the scenes with the Cockatoo in the cage were show highlights in their comic execution. Edith was quite wonderful singing gloriously out of tune in her cabaret and as the frustrated wife desperately seeking his love.

**Jo Chapman** and **Toria Bowker** were suitably alluring as Yvette and Mimi meeting the needs of Rene and the German café visitors. They too have great fun in supporting Edith in her cabaret contrasting well with her performance.

**Sally Hurry** as the French resistance fighter, Michelle made the most of her furtive entrances and exits in various disguises and of course her classic catchphrase. **Simon Hurry** looked and sounded suitably ridiculous in his "Harpo" wig as Colonel Strohm, again catching some of the nuances of the original's delivery and popping up briefly as Fairfax for two quick laughs.

**Nick Teale** was outrageously over the top in his two roles as the mispronouncing Crabtree, rising to the challenge of getting all his lines wrong and wonderfully ridiculous as the German Helga Geerhart, seducing Herr Flick, and others. He got the balance right of playing in drag without becoming a Pantomime Dame and handled the physical business well.

**Quiller Rees** as Captain Bertorelli was perhaps the closest to my memory of the TV characters and maintained his silly Italian accent throughout even when raising his voice. A very enjoyable characterisation and well contracted with his cameo appearances as Carstairs. **Oliver Nursey** maintained his steely stare throughout as Herr Flick creating the sinister and rather stiff Gestapo Officer.

**Dave Barker** as Monsieur LeClerc made the most of his short appearances in various disguises and was at his best as Hitler with the moustache on his finger! **Toby Adamson** was excellent as Lieutenant Gruber creating a fresh look to the character with wonderful facial reactions to the business especially in the mistaken conversations with Rene and the cockatoo. **Steve Smith** added to



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the farcical mayhem as General Schmelling , a character I don't recall from the TV series. **Heather King** provided good support in the non-speaking roles.

### Creative and Technical

**Tracy Corbett** directed the farcical comedy with some good touches, using the stage and auditorium spaces well and ensuring the comedy was silly and cheeky rather than rude and sexist. Farce is one of the most difficult genres to execute well and particularly in the second act, there was a sense that the timing and comedy would get better in the second week as the cast got used to playing the laughs and allowed it to flow more naturally and less forced.

**Alison Sharpe , Anne Robinson, and Andrew Darling** did well to reset the stage and auditorium areas quickly and efficiently between scenes guided by their blue head torches! **Pauline Teale's** long list of stage properties were well chosen to create the war time café but the Cockatoo in a cage was an outstanding practical property that worked brilliantly.

The Lighting Team with **Dave King** worked well with some well-timed blackouts and good general lighting and the Sound by **Patrick McCarthy** was well chosen with the 'Allo 'Allo theme tune a welcome introduction and amusing violin playing. The mouse traps firing sound was late on the night I saw the show, slightly spoiling a well telegraphed gag.

The Wardrobe by **Di Gosden** and **Heather King** was first class with great uniforms and medals and perfectly capturing the styling of the original TV show. The highlights of **Fiona Baker** and **Tracy Corbett's** makeup and hair were the character defining wigs for Edith with the bread rolls and long red locks and of course Strohm's wig and price tag!

The basic Café set by **Simon Porter** was well laid out with a very good bar area and French scene setting posters although it seemed a shame to cut a flap in the large back cloth for a single gag. The staging of the Colonel's office was a simple but effective switch.

There was a warm welcome from the Front of house team although there did seem to be some confusion over the front few rows of seats allocated.



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The Programme was attractively designed with very good cast biogs and pictures. However, the NODA section does not fully comply with the “Introduction to NODA” note required for the Programme competition rules.(see [Programme and Poster Competition - NODA](#)) .

This was an enjoyable entertainment making the most of a rather old-fashioned Lloyd and Croft script and building to a farcical conclusion. It successfully reminded us of the quality of the original Eighties TV Ensemble cast and this hard-working cast were energetically committed to recreating those classic characters and looked like they were really enjoying being back on stage which after all is what Amateur Dramatics is all about.

Thank you

***Nick***

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