

Review of Bedroom Farce  
by Lance Bassett of Oxford Mail

Just as the nights draw in and the rain never ceases to stop, along come the Banbury Cross Players with a production that lifts your spirits straight back to the halcyon days of high summer.

This time it was that good old Am Dram stalwart, Alan Ayckbourn's 'Bedroom Farce'. Directed by Trish Thompson, the choice of this very, very, funny play was an inspiration and thoroughly enjoyed by all on the opening night I attended.

Sadly there were a fair number of empty seats but through experience I know the first night is hard to fill the chairs and numbers tend to build up during the run.

As the action began, I have to say I didn't like the set. However as the play progressed I realised the set design was an inspiration. With the moves of the actors through the labyrinth of bedroom furniture the set worked a treat completely filling the stage and I fail to see how else it could have been laid out any better. Top marks then to Richard Ashby and team.

So to the play. For anyone who doesn't know the plot, the action takes place in three bedrooms over the course of one night. The scenario is simple. Malcolm and Kate are having a house-warming party the party is ruined by the antics of Trevor and his dotty partner Susannah. Trevor kisses old flame Jan who is attending the party alone because her hubby is in bed with a bad back. This seems to upset Susannah a tad who decamps to Trevor's parents Ernest and Delia whilst Trevor seeks a bed for the night. There you have it.

By now I am looking for something to criticise but alas nothing so far. Sure there were a few minor first night nerves and hesitations detectable but you get those in professional theatre so no complaints there.

Ernest & Delia played by Peter Bloor and Janice Lake succeeded in giving the credence of a retired married couple, naughtily eating pilchards in bed and looking forward to a lie in the next morning, as it was a Sunday.

Nick (him of the bad back) was so convincingly played by Andy Crump I am sure I felt the odd twinge myself on his behalf during his performance. He also starred in the shortest scene I have ever seen in a play, consisting of one word. Mr Ayckbourn sure can write 'em.

Helen Boughton ably played Nick's wife Jan who fought off the dastardly hirsute Trevor, the latest creation of the talented Rob Hall complete with a smooth polished accent that reminded me of Leslie Phillips. Tara Lacey, faultless as usual, played Susannah, Trevor's long suffering lady and had a fabulous routine with a pair of mini cymbals she used to remind herself she was attractive, confident and there was nothing to worry about out there. Hysterical.

You'll understand by now I am desperate for something to criticise but still failing badly. Blast!

The final duo in the piece is Tom Perry as Malcolm and his young wife Kate, whose party is the reason for the chaos, remember?

Tom convinced me he was a young married man who didn't know a lot about d-i-y and who got really upset when Kate suggested he wasn't all he thought he was in the bedroom department. Kate herself was sweetness and light, ah yes the tribulations of early marital bliss.

The Lighting plot must have covered a few pages and this again was carried out with panache by John Hicks and Linda Shaw.

In all a great play and a wonderful night's entertainment. However, I am so miffed not being able to say anything negative about the production I will reiterate on the seats in the Mill, they really are the most uncomfortable I have ever come across.

Lance Bassett

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