

NODA Review 27/04/19 Beside The Seaside

Bispham CastAways are a very young group with their production of Leslie Sands comedy Beside The Seaside only being their 3rd production.

I was welcomed very warmly by Hayley Price, half of the directing team for this piece, with Mark Marsden and showed to my seat with a welcome mocktail! With the sound of the Blackpool Organ playing over the speakers, it set the scene very well for all the Blackpool references. The play was performed at the Bispham United Reformed Church Hall and I have to say, whilst it being a nice venue, I was worried about the sound and projection from the actors in this space.

There were some slight technical issues to start with but the play quickly took shape and the audience found the level of the humour with a warm reception coming back to the performers.

The set and scenery were large and maybe at times a little in the way of the action but, effort had clearly been put into creating a realistic front room of this B&B. With a small cast list, you could tell that the cast had a great bond and worked well together throughout the whole piece, helping each other with useful movement and reactions.

Susan Hope played the slightly eccentric but generally likeable Mrs Austin and I have to say that the projection and character displayed by Susan was secure throughout and had a touch of "Mrs Bucket" about it - great! Shannon Poleon played the cleaner Florrie and had the audience and I in laughter on many occasions, timing and facial expressions used fully. Luke Foley played the flamboyant and at times quite angry Tony Brett. Luke did a good job portraying the womaniser but we did have a couple of accent slips. Nicky Alladice and Lisa Stoyles played the husband and wife team of Ethel and Wilf Pearson respectively. The chemistry between these performers was apparent with them acting well together. I did not enjoy the Tea with 6 sugars in Act 3 as I ended up wearing some of it!! :-).

The comic timing of some of the lines needed a little more work and there were some tendencies to throw away some of the lines a little. There were also some times when the 4th wall was being broken and I wished it hadn't. Sianan Conroy as Sally Pearson did well with her role with some sensitive moments with her parents, well done. Martin Thompson and Suzanne McEachran played the newly wedded Mr & Mrs Pepper and whilst their projection and acting was strong throughout I would have liked to see a little more facial expression and reaction for the other characters.

The direction team of Mark & Hayley have done a good job with their cast and have clearly thought out their slapstick and comic moments. I thought a lovely touch of keeping the performers in character throughout the interval and have them serve the complimentary refreshments was a great idea.

Well done to all involved in this play and I look forward to seeing what you do with the next one.