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TODS

A Comedy from Eric Chappell

Haywire

Tenterden Town Hall

Friday 25th May 2018

Director: Vernon Reeve

It was a rather appropriate choice this farce by Chappell at this particular time to put forward as a piece for adjudication by Amanda Sharpe-Conroy for the Kent Drama Association Full Length Play Festival with the Hay Festival, frequently referred to as it's actually taking place at this moment in time! Haywire is a classic 'ménage à trois', very funny and well proven. Alec has a book shop and lives above it. He arranges for his wife Maggie to go on a trip - 3 day capitals in 5 days, not forgetting the bulb fields! He is due to travel to Spain with Liz his bookshop assistant and mistress. However, not all goes according to plan when one disaster befalls another. He has to cover his tracks and he deals with each emergency when, yet another occurs.

A bright, A5 programme was created by stalwart John Sewell, using a clever motive of characters treading the wire. Well designed, using piles of books with different coloured covers for acknowledgements – something quite different, together with a book shelf containing books relevant to the plot with a set showing the scene structure. Another novel feature was a coloured framed photo of each member of the cast, NODA page, certainly good entry for the Poster and Programme annual competition. Multi-tasking again and responsible for solid lighting, sound, and effects, e.g. sunbed glow through an open door, a change of daylight to the electric central light fitting and wall lights to name a couple.

A good strong cast with Jo McBride taking the role of Maggie, wife of Alec Firth, never giving any clues as to her real intentions until the end of Act 2– her first role with TODS and I am sure many more to come. David Richardson was Alec whose part was mammoth, hardly off stage, very wordy, full of manic action, excellent facial expressions and some great repetitive one lines. Although taking a few prompts he characterised particularly well and was more than convincing as a husband trying so hard to cover his tracks attempting to get to Spain regardless with mistress Liz, but with a twist was reunited happily when Maggie admits she too was about to have a fling, with Peter Pearson of all people whilst away! Angela Patrick performed Phoebe with great attention to an 'elderly' but was still very canny despite appearing grumpy and deliberately awkward. Very good impression of a stroke – in fact we worried for her! And what a laugh! Her costume was just perfect and the knee length pop socks the icing on the cake. Jamie, baseball cap on sideways, jeans hanging off, a bit of a waster played by Simon Tomlinson was adept upon a pair of crutches, a part a little different from being a gangster in Sister Act! Susanne Buckley managed her bump very well as pregnant Mandy Firth, having her false alarm, with heated discussion on the merits of marriage with her poor confused father – a solid performance. After a series of family crises Alec decides instead of going to Marbella, he'll bring Spain to the sitting room. So, there he

is in his swimming trunks, towel around neck, goggles on head sipping sangria and playing 'Strangers on the Shore'. Great timing from the family coming and going causing hilarity and typical farce chaos, all well executed. Vernon Reeve motivated and his dedicated cast produced a most amusing classic farce.

The set was as stepping into a living room, including an opening window looking onto a property opposite – there was so much detail to it. Doors solid on both sides of stage. Stags head on the wall, Being an owner of a bookshop a large number of books were set on shelves and two bookcases. There was a desk fully dressed, a captain's chair – photographs, a music centre – flowers. A settee and easy chair and a low coffee table, standard lamp, various paintings and added later Spanish bull fighting scenes and a jug of sangria. Liz beautifully portrayed by Rebecca Sharp, quite different in looks and dress than Maggie, finally walks out having had enough, the last straw been bitten by fleas from the new puppy dog Dandy, the Airdale, Maggie returns early and with a refund from her cancelled trip, they can both go to Spain – no fantasy!

An enjoyable evening, thank you for your hospitality and you had a very positive adjudication too.

A shortened review will appear on the NODA website shortly.

Anne Lawson
Regional Representative
NODA SE District 3

National Operatic and Dramatic Association

15 The Metro Centre, Peterborough PE2 7UH

Tel01733374790 **Fax**01733237286 **Email**info@noda.org.uk **Web**www.noda.org.uk

Twitter @NODAtweets **Facebook** NationalOperaticDramaticAssociation

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