

**GREATER MANCHESTER DRAMA FEDERATION
3 ACT PLAY FESTIVAL 2019/20**

Society	Northenden Players Theatre Club
Title	Ladies in Lavender
Writer	Shaun Mckenna
Date & Time	12.02.20
Venue	The Old Library
Contact/host name	Andrew Foukles
Contact on the night	
Young actors in cast?	N
Licence available	N

Production highlights:

It's at this point that I should be waxing lyrical about the set and the acting, but the biggest surprise of the night and the main thing that added so much gravitas to the proceedings was the Actual performance of the live violin playing, I was waiting for the recording to kick in and the dummy playing, but wow, what a beautiful surprise this young man brought to the part. The first piece that was played added so much emotion to the piece that it brought the whole piece alive. Thank you to the team that took the time and effort it in finding someone who can actually not just play, but play SO well. A truly memorable evening.

THE PRODUCTION

<p>Adjudicator writes and identifies themes, challenges and requirements, etc., and details the requirements and elements of the production in which he was particularly interested.</p>	
<p>TECHNICAL</p>	
<p>Set and props A set which shows creativity and innovation and addresses the style of the production. Is well constructed. Props which are in period, authentic in appearance and placed strategically e.g. furniture.</p>	<p>Nigel Machin (and all the technical team) should take their own separate bow in the same way the actors do as there were so many beautifully crafted parts that the technical team brought to this piece. This set had been lovingly crafted and so much thought (in my eyes) had gone into each piece of wood that was used in the jigsaw of pieces that created the set. From stage left we had a wooden wall, all individually placed in various sizes and textures, an earthy and windswept feel, within this wall were hidden shelves, a radiogram and various hiding holes for props used in the play, each one crafted with the same wood work and blended really well. Behind this was the door to the rest of the house, and all of this was placed on a decking of various shaded and sized planks, creating the veranda. In the centre of the stage we had a very interesting piece of apparatus; there was a walkway style bridge that moved with the manipulation of a wheel back of stage. This walkway on wheels moved back and forth silently and at some points invisibly to be used as a bench, a bed, all depending on the location of the play at that point be it beach, house or bedroom. Each one in turn was instantly recognisable in its location; no more was needed than this simple move. (Although the only negative of the whole set I would be willing to say was, I wished that I didn't see the wheel being turned by the cast, then it would have added that little bit more mystery in its working, this is Not a criticism as it worked very well, just a little enhancement in my eyes) On the opposite side of the stage we had 3 steps moving the stage upwards to a back entrance, again all crafted in the same wood, and down the side we had various grasses and plants that we would see by the beach side, each plant had been though out and not</p>

	<p>just planted, there was height and a real growth feel to these “placed” items. In the plainer middle area of the stage we had a bed of sand and again plants were growing in the natural breaks. Behind this set we had a roller system with a window style frame, which moved from left to right and added a subtle change to rooms such as the bedroom. All changes were made by the cast and not stage crew, for which I personally thank you as it would have broken the picture. During the play we had many props brought on and off, so much in keeping were they that again they added to the time frame, the various pails and buckets, tea sets, chairs and a unique shaped violin case, were all of the age. I think throughout the entire play, I only wrote one item down that I did notice, this was the white plastic paint palette that was to modern, as it would have been a wooden mixing palette in my opinion, and if this is all I can mention, then the whole team should be proud, as this was a beautifully crafted stage and prop list, well done on an excellency addition to the evenings performance.</p>
<p>Lighting and Sound Lighting and sound effects which contribute towards the dramatic potential, etc.</p>	<p>So far this in this year’s play list, I have sat through many plays that were all located in the one set, and we have witnessed very little to create the differences as its usually one room or setting. This was a very different feel, it could have been played the same, but this team and I presume director wanted a flowing feel to each time and location, we just didn’t get book ended black outs we had a visual and oral soundtrack that moved this play along and kept the flow on track. The lightning, the thunder and storm, were all in keeping and felt natural. Alongside this we had a visual wall with a video that showed the sea at various strengths to help create the whole story of the storm and the seas strength. This wall also gave us the Day and night, the beach side, and various other locations of the play. This really helped to paint the whole picture. The high light of the lighting was the sea scape; I presume a Gobo effect over the beach to create the moonlight over the sea, a beautiful addition to the set.</p> <p>During the play we also had story telling of</p>

	<p>Hans Christian Anderson, and what a really clever use of the stage team to create shadow puppets, this was a magical addition to the story telling, both to compliment the oral part of this from Ursula, but to help the audience to visualize it, as if you were catering for every member of the audience who have different ways to see a story, in voice and in vision.</p> <p>And to complement all the visual aspects of the play we had the soundtrack that was to become the focal point of the plays story. You gave us solo and orchestral pieces for the violin, I won't show my ignorance in trying to name any tune, but each one added that extra layer to the piece till the ending where we saw the real music take over.</p> <p>Interspersed were the odd recordings made on the radio, the weather forecast and the concert, one presumes curtesy of the BBC in the play, these were a little to crystal clear, and if there was an added crackle to the recording, it would have just added a little more icing to this cake, in the same way Arthur Askey and the Busy Bee had.</p> <p>Overall this was another team that added so much to this play, and I personally am grateful as it created such a visual delight to the evening. Well done to all the team Nigel, Dave, Fran and Christine and any others that worked hard behind the scenes.</p>
<p>Costumes Costumes which are in of the period, well fitting, colour co-ordinated and enhance characterisation.</p>	<p>Just when you thought the stage team had added so much to the evening, we have a costume team in Mary and Phil who excelled themselves in the costumes, each piece looked perfect, the shades of the colours for the sisters, added the earthly feel, none of them to vibrant and over the top, lots of muted brown's, beiges and blues. Each one looked a perfect fit for the sister, and each costume had complimentary stockings and shoes. The house coats of the various characters were all very reminiscent of the style my grandmother would wear, and each change kept on adding to the homely feel this play had. The doctor in his woollen/tweed style suit and hat, very much an English gent, and Dorcas had darker plainer clothes, which added to the housekeeper role, and kept her very different from the sisters. In Olga you gave us a very</p>

	<p>Bohemian feel to her out fit with the white blouse and coloured skirt and head scarf, very Agatha Christie heroine in feel. There is no point in listing the many costume changes we had for the characters, as they all worked so well and blended in to the point of not noticing, which is a good thing, as that meant they were so right. Another team that deserves a round of applause. Well done.</p>
<p>Makeup and hair Make hair and wigs which are in period and appropriate to the production (including size of venue) and assist in developing the character.</p>	<p>The final layer to the visual representations we had was hair and make-up, Both of the sisters (I presume?) used their own natural hair and had contrasting styles, one pulled back showing us the more uptight character, and the other sister had a more natural flow and central parting. Both looked and felt right. Dorcas had a tight close curl to her hair, and I really couldn't tell if her own or a wig, take this as a compliment as I did keep looking to try to work this out.</p> <p>You gave Olga a much more free flowing natural style and again this went with the free spirit type of character she had. The gentlemen had their own style and again all of this looked and felt right for the period.</p> <p>The makeup was kept to a minimum, and had a natural look for the characters. All of this added and complimented the style and periods of the piece.</p>
<p>Total marks</p>	

DIRECTION By Eleanor Ford

Set before the war, in its mentions of Hitler and the innocence that they had at that point about the world around them, all of this was adding up to an ambiance of a different world and time than that of today, This was a beautifully created piece, accurate costumes, excellent playing, timing and a gentle humour, with a sensitive directors vision. You made use of the restricted stage area, with the use of the ingenious design, it all fell into place for you and the ebb and flow of the piece was crafted with ease. This was a lovingly crafted director's vision.

The staging of the piece helped you to create multiple areas, without any laboured scene changes, you kept this in motion with the on and off of the characters as they went upstairs, with a beat and natural pause between exiting the downstairs and entering the bedroom, again all thought through properly. You surrounded yourself with a very competent technical team who administered every vision of yours with skill; this was a Team effort throughout.

You had a strong and confident team onstage also; the players worked well as a team and supported each other very well.

The play is set in and around the seaside cottage in which Janet and Ursula Widdington have lived all their lives. This led me to the first comment I wrote down, if they lived there all their lives why did we have two very contrasting accents between the ladies and the House keeper Dorcas. Was this because the girls were privately educated away from the area, hence a more crisp and clear accent, or did we choose to have them more "English" than the accent you had Dorcas speak in?, she had a distinct accent for the character and stood out with this, to emphasise the difference in class of the characters. I have no issue with the decision you made, as it worked, it just made me question them.

I thought you made a distinct difference between the sisters; Ursula was the innocent child of the couple, someone who hadn't experienced life as much as Janet. Janet felt more up tight and the parent of the couple, in body, language and in some of the looks she gave Ursula. You had a really nice paring here, Ursula gave us the vulnerable and natural flow for the piece, this was a really well constructed part, we went with her the whole time, we watched as she fell in love and watched as it all came crashing down, as though this was the first time she had experienced these feelings, we believed and emphasised with her. The directions of these scenes with Andrea were a joy to watch, full of innocence and love.

Andrea had a slight advantage in this character with creating an accent that was maintained and believable throughout this play, but this aside you handled a first time player with ease and we again believed and enjoyed watching this character develop through the play, he started timid and reluctant, and we watched as he became innocent and

childlike, maybe the child Janet had never had? The joy he had in hearing that his violin idol was the relation of Olga was a really exciting moment of innocence and happiness. You worked hard on this actor and created a skilful piece. And to top it off..... He played the violin. I watched the doctor play the violin, maybe just ok in style, it passed in the moment and worked, and then the violin was passed to Andrea, and all I was hoping is that he could play, I did not want someone miming to a recorded sound, and oh what a moment it was for us as an audience, those first few notes were incredible in creating an emotion, this welled inside and was a real pleasure to be part of. The fact he played added so much weight and emotion to the scenes in which he played. Thank you for this moment; it is certainly one to remember.

The other characters were there to create the final picture; they had their moments and worked well, but didn't have the natural weight that the sisters and Andrea had. The doctor had a real stiffness about his moves and delivery, I suppose to add to the weight that the doctor role would have had at that time, a pillar of the community; I did want him to loosen up in some of the moments, especially around Olga, who he had an unrequited infatuation over. Dorcas was another character that added meat to some of the scenes, in this character you created a natural dead pan delivery of the humour, she was the backbone for the funnier moments and they all worked very well, my only niggle was the strong accent that bordered every now and then in over caricature than natural, however that said she certainly was a strong member of this team.

I felt you handled the unrequited love from Ursula towards Andrea well, in her eyes we saw each moment. The times he lay down, head in lap and you could see the thoughts going through her head. In these scenes you created a tenderness that was palpable.

Each scene blended in to the next, with the lights, sounds and the small moves you gave the cast, to move the window flat, to wind up or down the bench/bridge. You made sure we as an audience were with you the whole way through, not one moment was lost for us to wonder off in our thoughts. This was a seamless play and had moments of joy. The final scene was a lovely picture, we saw the four characters sat still listening to the concert of Andreas, we saw the thoughts in their eyes, and the moments they were remembering of the times he lived there. And the final moment for me was the look on Ursula's face, this was a woman proud of the man she knew, but lost in the man she wanted to know more..... This was a special piece of beautiful theatre and a massive Team effort. Well done for a truly memorable piece of theatre.

ACTORS

Ursula. Melanie Davy

In this play we have two sisters, very clear characters, one reality based and one a bit of a dreamer, Ursula was our dreamer, I questioned in the play what actual life experience she has had. I presume there has never been a man in her life, from the questions she asked Janet about her relationship with Peter. This made her vulnerable when the passions started to surface during the play. When I say passions, it wasn't anything to untoward as I don't think she would know what to do in these situations. What we witnessed was progression from a joyful motherly love to what I saw as a deeper love, an unrequited love for this young man. I witnessed the journey in your eyes, and at times there was a real passion and in later cases I saw your pain. You gave a very natural performance as Ursula, you had me from the word go and I believed in your ups and downs as the character. The looks you gave Olga in your jealousy were wonderful, if looks could kill. You worked very well with Janet, who gave us a sterner side, emphasizing your innocence even more. And the relationship that you had with Andrea was a delight as you both sparked off each other. This characterisation had lots of small nuances that all built up to a performance that you should be very proud of.

Janet. Jill Taylor.

You were the earthly bound, straighter laced character in this relationship, I believed that you loved Andrea as much as Ursula over the time frame of the play, but in a motherly way, perhaps the child she never had. You had more common sense in the situations and watched over Ursula so she didn't make too much of a fool of herself. This was a warm relationship that the sisters had, but we knew Janet was in charge and was the parent of the sibling group. You played her with a stiffer back to the pair and gave us a very warm vocal projection. A strong balance between the sisters made this a great pairing.

Andrea. Savva Zverev

I am led to believe this is your first foray in to the acting world. The biggest compliment I can give you is that we as an audience could not tell, you gave an air of confidence and professionalism that betrayed this information. Well done on a great start in the theatre world. You had a little help with maintaining a very confident accent and held a great vocal projection throughout the play, I believed at the beginning in the development of your learning English words and the speech grew in confidence as time went on, it started Timid and developed in to a childlike innocence in your learning of the language. Was it childlike as

they treated you as their child and not the man you were, who knows, but it worked? Andrea was a man of few words, and didn't have long monologue type speeches, which worked to the characters advantage, as when you did speak it came over with a passion. The moments you spoke about Danilov were followed by a leap in enthusiasm and excitement; it was obvious he meant so much to the character. I really enjoyed the warmth between Andrea and Ursula, It was a very believable relationship, that it was a surprise when he left, and the hurt that was left behind. And finally as I have already written, the Playing of the instrument was something we know you excelled in and have spent your life studying, well done and thank you for a memorable evening.

Dorcas. Rosalind Ford.

You gave us all a lesson in subtle humour, you underplayed almost every funny line, which made them all the better. "she made it, don't blame me" over the pie, was an example of making the most of the part. You had a face for every situation, from the nosey earwiggling moments to the laugh our loud funnier times. The accent worked for the character, but as mentioned earlier, there were the odd moments that it went into a caricature and lost a little of the naturalness with it. It emphasised the class system between your character and the sisters, but added to the humour of Dorkas. We heard every word in the vocal projection of the piece, and you came across confident and very much part of a team. Well done for this part and the humour you brought to the play.

Dr Mead. Tim Collier.

The doctor came across very matter of fact throughout the play; I suppose that was the formality of the characters back ground. He had stiffness to him and I very much wanted him just to loosen up a bit, especially in the more informal moments of the play. He was a lover of the violin, and played a little piece for us, it was very much a nice piece, but showed the flaws of the man learning the instrument. I wondered if you had learnt for this play or were you an amateur player?

The moment this character came to life was when you were making the speech about the Folly on the hill, and watching your painful moment when you were being rebuffed by the independent Olga for whom you were secretly in love with. Well done on this role.

Olga. Rosie Barnes.

Another newcomer to the stage, and another person whom I am surprised, as you had a natural confidence and stage presence for this character. I saw in your face that you were not interested in the advances of the doctor, and had an air of independence for the

character. I thought the accent was ok, and on the whole confident. There was the odd slip at moments, but none of this distracted from your performance. And for a first time, be happy that you gave a good performance and it would be interesting to see how you develop.

Total marks	
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OVERALL ACHIEVEMENT

This whole performance of the play was the very epitome of the Teamwork that we must have to create a performance of this standard. The staging, the lighting, sound, the costumes, and every aspect of this production had been crafted and created with care. The teams had a vision and created it skilfully. The pairing of Ursula and Andrea created the right amount drama for us to believe and enjoy the moments played out before us. This play had pace and moved along swiftly, and the music was sublime. I really enjoyed this production and look forward to whatever else you have to offer.

I also need to comment on the journey that the group has had to get to this stage in 12 months in your new home, is truly amazing and this group is the true meaning of what amateur dramatics represents in a community. Well done and thank you for allowing me to witness the production.

Total marks	
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Adjudicator (print)	J schofield
Adjudicator (sign)	
Date	16.02.20