**Wadhurst Dramatic Club**

**Absurd Person Singular by Alan Ayckbourn**

**Wadhurst Commemoration Hall**

**Friday 23rd May 2014**

**Director: Jamie Crawford**

A three act, hilarious comedy set in the ‘70’s on three consecutive Christmas Eves, involving three couples, ambitious tradesman Sidney Hopcroft, architect Geoffrey Jackson and banker Ronald Brewster-Wright together with their respective wives. Action takes place in three very different kitchens. We follow their changing fortunes, experiencing the rise and prosperity of the Hopcrofts with the tables turning and the gradual decline of the others. Act 1 takes place in Jane & Sidney’s bright, gadget filled kitchen when they are anxious to make a good impression, hoping for investment. It is very wet! Oh dear, not all goes to plan. The next Christmas Eve is spent at Geoffrey and Eva’s somewhat neglected flat. Things are not going well for them and a night of chaos ensues. Eva’s depression leads her to try various methods of attempted suicide, the electrics cause Ronald to have a shock and the unseen dog George is causing mayhem. The next Christmas is at Ronald and Marion’ s house - Marion worse for wear with drink is upstairs in her bedclothes, Eva coaxes her down, and confused Ronald is sitting in his overcoat as there is no heating. Party games commence. The tables have really turned - the Hopcrofts have advanced to material prosperity and sadly the others are now dancing to Sidney’s tune.

**FRONT OF HOUSE:** Met by members of the Club we were escorted by **James Edwards** to our table nicely laid with gingham cloths and table decorations including tinsel, and in the background, Christmas Carols giving us the right feel for the play being set on Christmas Eve. **Jane Altenhoven** plus helpers ran the busy bar.

**PROGRAMME/PUBLICITY**: A colour caricature of partying wife Marion Brewster-Wright was the theme for both poster and the A5 folder type programme designed by **Nick Dann.** In simple folder style all essential information was well presented, including the six cast members’ photos and biogs.

**SCENERY: Colin** and **Nance Hand** created some wonderful sets. This was a difficult one having to produce three different kitchens types, one for each act using the intervals for the complete changes. This did work well but required rather more manpower than usual. There was the washing machine and a cooker to be moved - drawers and cupboards being opened and closed. Also, there was the logistics of running water and electricity to take into account. There were clever changes of entry doors, views through the glass, reversing panels to become shelving, adding a beautifully painted blue range complete with tiles, curtains and the wall paintings - all a lot of hard work which really paid off. Well placed props throughout the play.

**MAKE UP:** Six good characters. The banker and wife starting quite sophisticated and then became shabby as time progressed. Getting wet worked well as did the dishevelled look of Eva and then the more mature ‘we’re doing well’ look of the Hopcrofts including Sidney’s moustache for added importance. All very well thought through.

**COSTUME**: **Jill Haskell** made good choices for the 70’s era – the long dresses frequently worn at that time for parties, the rather flamboyant look of Geoffrey the architect, the city gent banker Ronald in his suit etc. The wellies that were filled with water, the too large raincoat (I think that could have looked wetter after being in such a downpour) the great slippers. Much attention to detail.

**SOUND/LIGHTING:** **Peter** and **John Bush** prepared excellent sound and lighting for this complex production. Good cuing of lights on/off, sparks and noises off with rain on opening doors and the ghastly barking dog all timed to perfection, music from the radio etc. Then there was the running water, brilliant.

**THE PRODUCTION: Jamie Crawford** did an outstanding job with a very good cast. This was a fast and furious piece with some quite dangerous action at times superbly executed. Script was well rehearsed and delivered with **Dot Smytherman** having an almost flawless night. **Adam Lewis-Plant** played the perfect Sidney who never stopped moving, his nervous wife Jane, **Jess Mendez** her debut with WDC, clad in yellow marigolds polished her performance after a rather quiet start. **Amanda Dann** portrayed the depressed Eva beautifully, using fantastic facial expressions particularly during a long episode when husband Geoffrey, played convincingly by **Martin Athey,** spoke totally uninterrupted. **Richard Bruce** was the upstanding bank manager who eventually let his armour drop and his electric shock scene with the adding of the washing basket contents was memorable. Hugely amusing was **Janet Bamberger** as Marion who perfected her drink problem immensely well, some of her lines were hysterical. An enjoyable, funny and well acted play. I must mention the backstage crew for their hard work between acts and thank the ladies of the kitchen for a very tasty sausage casserole supper during the first interval and rather delicious sweet during the second.

A précis of this review will appear on the NODA website shortly.

**Anne Lawson**

**Regional Representative**

**NODA SE**

**District 3**