



Be inspired by amateur theatre

Wadhurst Dramatic Club
Arms and the Man
Wadhurst Memorial Hall
Saturday October 29th 2016
Director: Jamie Crawford

The hall was nicely laid out in cabaret form for the enjoyable savouries prepared by Diane Wale, Gillian Buss and supporters during the first interval including a glass of wine from the bar with tasty deserts served during the second interval. Music was carefully chosen and was played whilst the audience took their seats.

The play, a beautifully scripted period costumed comedy in three Acts was written by George Bernard Shaw, located in a Bulgarian town in 1885 during the time of the Serbo Bulgarian War. Attractive Phoebe Horn as Raina Petkoff is in her bedroom has just heard the Bulgarians have scored a victory in a cavalry charge led by her fiancé Major Sergius Saranoff, a handsome daring young soldier played by Fred Lynam. Juliette Finn as Louka the maid rushes in to impart the news that the Serbs are being chased through the streets and they must lock up the house. Raina gets into bed but is confronted by Capt. Bluntschli a Swiss professional soldier performed by Merlin Beedell. Being a romantic and an idealist, she hides him, nick naming him her 'chocolate cream soldier' as he adores chocolate! But the question is, is he a coward? As in a French farce the household is in complete turmoil with one action leading to another confusion, and great amusement with the appearance and disappearance of Major Petkoff's jacket! The newly returned from war Major was portrayed confidently by David Bainger.

Once more, Colin and Nance Hand designed and created the beautiful Bulgarian sets with such attention to detail, European interiors, transfer decoration and wonderful vistas through the charming shuttered bedroom window and living rooms. I was delighted to have at long last met them both. Stage dressing was well thought through and personal props were very acceptable.

I particularly liked Nick Dann's programme design - the simplicity of the folded card A5 with the front cover depicting the young moustached dapper soldier complete with gold trim and the period costumed ladies. Cameo photos of the cast with biogs, a short synopsis, characters, production team and acknowledgements plus the NODO logo all there.

Costumes were outstanding. The wardrobe team created a magical look. Hair styles were perfect and what can one say about that moustache. Fred managed this with aplomb! The gentlemen looked particularly smart in well-fitting uniforms, with a good flavour of national costume for Grainne Murphy as Raina's mother Catherine. Raina's long coat was stunning. Boots were good, although I wasn't too keen on Butler Nicola's wellingtons!

Jamie Crawford certainly extended his expertise throughout this production. He set his cast a pace which kept flowing. Script was articulate, it was funny with timing precise, natural movement and maximum usage of the whole stage area. Having two intervals made for good scene changes and the technical back up matched.

National Operatic and Dramatic Association

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The cast themselves created their own individual characters and each quite different. They worked well as a team, but I must mention in particular Phoebe Horn as Raina. Her poise, stage presence and diction was outstanding. Credit to the whole cast and crew.

Thank you Wadhurst for a very funny and well performed entertainment.

A précis will be posted on the NODA website shortly.

Anne Lawson
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