

"The God of Carnage"

I think I would have chosen something a little more exciting for the first play of the Rep's new season, as although I enjoyed *The God of Carnage*, I can't say I was overwhelmed by it.

The play was reasonably well-written, but I thought the impetus went halfway through Act 2 – and although it was a good contrast to the start of the Act, I felt as if I was missing out on something. A great deal of amusement was caused by a small technical hitch during the bows!

The set was excellent – very elegant with a delightful colour combination. Beautifully dressed, with some stunning artwork, which all went to create a sophisticated setting, belied by the screaming fish wives the actors became! It was lit well, to make it seem like a nice bright day. The vase of tulips, centre stage and central to the storyline looked lovely.

The contrast in the two couples was marked in their costume – or so I supposed – the more refined Annette and Alain, in fairly formal stylish smarter clothes, whilst the less refined couple Veronique and Michel, wore more casual clothes.

Of all the characters my favourite was Christine Hobart as Annette – she was controlled, but passionate, and had to cope with a vast array of emotions, plus vomiting very realistically. There were also some lovely facial expressions going on, which kept the character alive throughout the play, even when the focus was not on her.

Jenna Ryder-Oliver turned in her usual on-the-note performance as Veronique, trying desperately to be refined, but reverting somewhat to her roots when letting fly. On the whole a good interpretation, but I would have said to pull back slightly on the more emotional lines for clarity.

Dave Corbett as Alain (Annette's husband) has improved greatly over the last few years, and whilst he couldn't hope to compete 100% with the experience and ability of the ladies, he gave a good account of himself. I would have liked to see a little more concern and perhaps controlled aggression with his phone calls – which were incredibly annoying, and I felt the rest of the cast could have reacted with more exasperation to this too.

The fourth member of the cast was Dave Sims as Michel – who for me was the weak link. He got some good expression when he was angry, but I was not convinced by his 'normal' persona – and lost a lot of words in Act 1 because he was not projecting well. There was also a problem in his eyeline – I didn't get the impression he was actually looking at or connecting with the other characters, whilst I could see they were all connecting with each other, or studiously ignoring the others, whichever the script dictated.

Act 2 warmed up considerably for a while, and there was some very ripe language, which coming from these two ladies was very funny – I suppose I term them ladies loosely, but they both created multi-faceted women, which was interesting.

The pace was fairly good throughout – and I loved the problem of the hamster, which was interwoven into the main plot.

I enjoyed the evening – and found it interesting and also revealing to see how the two families deteriorated from being polite to tearing strips off their partners and the other couple.

I would just like to take a moment to pay tribute to Life Member George Baker, who is 90 this week, and is being honoured at the performance on Wednesday, with a tribute from Alastair Brown for his devotion to the Rep over the years, and his family present to cheer him on.

Nova Horley