

"OUT OF ORDER"

Out of Order is a very funny farce anyway – but the Rep under the direction of Roger Scales for this production, certainly had us rolling in the aisles. It was fast-paced without being frantic, and I know I was not the only member of the audience who had tears rolling down their faces – very entertaining and enjoyable.

The cast were well-chosen, and all really stepped up to the plate, with good technical back up, per se the window in particular!

Joe Butcher put in a sterling performance as Richard Willey, adviser to the Prime Minister, and an archetypal minister, charming, faithless, manipulative, but always sure that everyone will do exactly what he says, gathering lie upon lie to extricate himself from the previous lie – Joe always gives us a well-studied character, and as I understand it, at fairly short notice, so his command of the part was all the more astonishing – and he was on stage virtually the whole time. Nice one Joe.

I was also extremely impressed with a relative newcomer to the Rep, Anthony Bird, he played Richard's hapless PPS George Pigden, the butt of all his lies and unwilling helpmate in all Richard's wild imaginings. Anthony started with a timid persona, gradually gaining impetus as he got more and more involved with Richard's lies, finally showing himself to be a red-blooded young man, well able to take advantage of the situations and females thrust upon him. An excellent portrayal.

Hayley Vaughan played the opposition leader's secretary, Jane Worthington, embarking on an affair with Richard, but never getting any further than removing her dress – she showed great understanding of the part, and did not appear to be at all worried about appearing in a very fetching corselet and panties!! Just the right amount of timidity, threaded through with anxiety when her ruthless and angry husband appeared on the scene.

Gosh, we had to keep our wits about us to follow all the nuances of the plot! Adam Butcher played the very angry Ronnie Worthington. He managed to keep the level of voice and performance up the whole way through, except when he was clinging to one or other of the cast's legs crying over his wife! Good contrast from angry and shouting to crying and whimpering. A very cheeky exit caused much appreciation!

Dave Hillman really came up to the mark in this production as the Hotel Manager, he certainly seemed to be relaxed with the part, and got some real meaning and comedy into it. Again the contrasts between being the slightly obsequious manager, becoming more and more exasperated with Richard, were noticeable.

I liked Tracey Chatterley as Pamela Willey, Richard's wife, who turned up unexpectedly, her reaction to George's advances was very good.

Richard Garrett played the wiley, conniving Waiter to perfection, you could see the columns of figures totting up in his head, as he earned more and ever-bigger tips. He got thrown around a bit towards the end, but managed it all very well.

Alex Brewer was a good Body – except for the one time when the cupboard swung open unintentionally! – and he just couldn't stop a slight smile – but otherwise, he

acted 'dead' very well. Loved the scene on the sofa with George – nicely achieved. His confusion as he started to gain his memory was very telling – Alex is maturing into a good performer.

Then we had Liz Blower as Gladys, George's mother's nurse. Just one other problem for poor George, but one which turned to his advantage eventually. The change between the prim and proper nurse, and the rampant woman was such fun.

The final piece in the jigsaw was the lovely Stephanie Overington as the Maid, with a very believable accent, and looking impossibly young and fresh – such a good contrast to the rest of the cast.

The music and lighting were all suitable for the piece, and as mentioned before, the operation of the window was excellent – it must have been very well made to come crashing down with such a vengeance so often. Loved it.

The set was up to the usual high standard of the Rep, with the window and balcony giving access to both hotel rooms, and being the setting for all the comedy, with the door to suite 650 visible through the main door of 648 – all creating the feel of a real hotel room, and the exits facilitated the ease of movement required for such a fast-paced production.

Farce is often seen as the poor relation to a good drama, but when it is well done, as it was in this case, it shows the strengths of the actors, and they all gave good accounts of themselves – no weak links here, so well done all of you, a super light-hearted evening, with loads of laughs.

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