

"THE 39 STEPS" – Dunstable Rep

The last play of the Dunstable Rep season proved to be an engaging and well-acted piece. Bekka Prideaux can be proud of herself and her cast for giving us yet another 'different' production, and one which many people were not expecting.

The set accommodated the fast scene changes, and I liked the use of the storage facility back centre. The whole being lit very well – to give atmosphere and meaning, along with some very evocative music. I was speaking with someone about music within plays to link scenes and moods, and this is something that the Rep does particularly well, it keeps the audience engaged whilst the changes etc are effected. There were also some very nice and diverse sound effects.

The cast of four people created a funny spoof of the original tense thriller – which was very well-acted, and the fact that only John O'Leary as Richard Hannay stayed as the same character throughout, is testament to the diversity of the actors. The pairing of Joe Butcher and Matt Flitton was very good – they bounced off each other (sometimes literally) very well, and gave us a multitude of characters and accents. I particularly liked Matt as Professor Jordan's wife – the suspenders on his socks just making the transformation complete!!

These two shared many funny moments – the train scene was excellent – as was the Memory Man and the hotel owners. All very diverse and funny. I loved the positioning of the armchair and quick sit down in the Professor's house – nicely done.

It was lovely to see Kelley Sarson back on a Dunstable stage again, she has matured into a versatile performer, playing at least three different ladies over the course of the play. Anabella the spy was very middle Eastern and mysterious, whilst Pamel was a bright young thing, and Margaret a repressed Scottish wife – all of which she accomplished very well. Good to see you back Kelley.

And so to Mr O'Leary – we are probably more used to seeing John as an OTT comedy character, but the part of Richard Hannay was an altogether more refined role – which John created well, and retained throughout. He gave the impression of the debonair 1930's gentleman, with nothing much more on his mind than a whisky and soda and the search for something to take his mind off his boredom. I liked, and felt infuriated by the character, as one would with a slightly repressed gentleman of that age, but felt he really suited the part, and did it justice.

There were many scene changes, all completed quickly and without fuss, which enhanced the action, and the costumes were entirely suitable, although I did think that perhaps Pamela would have had a jacket on as she'd was travelling, and I would have liked to have seen a nicer wig for Pamela as well.

All in all a fitting end to the season, which has been a good one once again – with the new season looking to have a good selection of interesting plays. So thanks to the Rep for keeping us all thoroughly entertained, enthralled,, amazed and intrigued for another year.

Nova Horley