

Key for Two, FADS November 2017

Combine the talents of two great comedy writers, and the result is a wonderful farce. Farce is a comedy which is highly exaggerated, usually set in a single place and in most cases an improbable plot. All the best ingredients to entertain an audience. The skill of the actors is to keep up the fast moving pace without overdoing it, and, for the most part, that is what we were treated too.

Set in Brighton, in a large Regency flat we meet Harriet. There we discover that she entertains 2 married lovers, Gordon and Alec, with neither being aware of the other. Gordon complains about the costs of keeping a wife and a mistress but pays up anyway. Alec from Grimsby, who is something big in fish also has a moan about the expenses and then Harriet invents a mother, who seems to drink a lot!! Harriet's old friend Ann arrives unexpectedly and says she is separated from her husband. Then it all kicks off.....Gordon slips on some fish and sprains his ankle and confines himself to bed. Alec returns and Harriet makes up a strange story to explain who everyone is.....later Ann's Husband turns up, very drunk, and declares his love for Harriet. This impossible situation then gets worse with arrival of both the wives to reclaim their husbands.

Val Daly headed the cast as Harriet and gave us a competent performance and came across well as the "Hostess with the Mostest". Such a presence on stage with facial expressions which lit up the stage and, for the majority of the time, seemed in total control.

John Dorking as Gordon played his part well. Good work with the sprained ankle.

Dave Holden also acquitted himself very well as Alec. Just the right amount of comedy, especially in the section when he carried Gordon on his back. Well maintained accent.

Sam Merrick as Ann was a joy to watch. Very natural in her part as the friend with a roving eye.

John Lamonde faired reasonably well as the drunken husband with good expressions and body movement, but he tried a little too hard to be drunk and so it seemed overacted. Personally, I didn't see the need to have an open zip on the trousers, but that's only my opinion.

And last, but not least, Lyndsey Kite and Elizabeth Toon gave believable performances as the wives in search of the errant husbands. It's not easy to get to grips with a character when you are on for a short space of time, but both ladies did well.

Overall, I felt that it lacked a little pace, especially in the first act. It did pick up again especially in the hilarious Nursing Home section.

I would like to congratulate everyone on their diction and clarity. I could hear every word, even those delivered from the back of the stage.

I realise that it is not always possible to get the right age actors, and in this production there was some difference in the playing ages which I had difficulty in accepting, even though everyone did their best in the roles.

I would like to congratulate the set builders. This is a set designed for a West End stage and to squash it all into your small stage was a triumph. However, I would like to raise a few points. When using a cutaway wall, could you not have stepped it down from the door frame? This would've given a bit more stability to the door frame and possibly prevented the constantly opening bedroom door- although a stronger magnet might have done the trick. A part wall there would have also stopped

the cast, and all those who went into the bedroom were guilty of this, putting their hands around the door frame. It may have been to aid balance, but it didn't look good.

Props and set dressing were great but I like to see liquid in cups of tea or coffee. In the first scene it was obvious there wasn't any, and it looks so much better when actors can actually drink it unless everyone has perfect mime skills, which is rare.

Please, actors, be careful about the use of the fourth wall. Unless your character has a narration/narrative with the audience, then please keep all your lines within the context of the play. I realise it's tempting to speak to the audience, especially when you have a funny line, but, it is unnecessary. If a line is delivered well, the audience will still laugh.

The audience on the Saturday matinee certainly laughed out loud and went away happy, and that is all you can hope for.