

ABSURD PERSON SINGULAR

Writtle Cards - 18.11.11

Reviewer – Michael Gray

More tinsel in the auditorium, more fractured families with Yuletide issues.

This is the Ayckbourn set on Christmas Eves past, present and future in three different kitchens. And what splendid kitchens they were [Pete Goodwin] – just like something from a 70's Hygena catalogue.

Michele Moody's laugh-a-minute production, emphasising the farce rather than the darker side, had a strong comedic cast. In the orange kitchen, Neil Smith, playing an annoying, boring chap who's desperate to impress as the play starts, but calling the party-game shots by the final curtain – a consistently funny performance, well matched by Sharon Goodwin as his mousy wife, getting worked-up in company, happiest in pinny and Marigolds. I admired the attention to detail in this crucial first act – the party noise off-stage-left, the rain off-stage-right. Different doorbell, different styling for the kitchen where young Eva [Shelley Goodwin] sits silently, surrounded by crumpled suicide notes. A weak, unstable flower-child, by Act Three she's got it together, the power behind her ineffectual, feckless architect partner [Chris Ivermee].

Sorry not to meet the life-and-soul scouting, school-teaching Potters, or glimpse their kitchen. The last couple, pine furniture and a paraffin heater, were the wonderful Brewster-Wrights, ageing banker Ronald [Daniel Curley, a crusty DofE sound-alike] and his second wife Marion [Liz Curley]. His electric shock and her maudlin drunk were two memorable highlights of a very enjoyable escapist evening.