

# **NORTH ESSEX THEATRE GUILD**

## **FULL LENGTH FESTIVAL 2010 – 11**

### **ADJUDICATION**

<b>Group</b>	<i>C A R D S Writtle</i>
<b>Venue</b>	<i>Writtle Village Hall</i>
<b>Date of Adj.</b>	<i>30<sup>th</sup> March 2011</i>
<b>Production</b>	<i>Comic Potential</i>
<b>Director</b>	<i>Sarah Wilson</i>
<b>Adjudicated by</b>	<i>Jenny Burke</i>
<b>Accompanied by</b>	<i>Anne Sexton</i>

#### **Front of House / Publicity**

For my colleague, Anne, this was her first visit to Writtle. It is always interesting to visit a different venue for the first time to see a group perform. We were welcomed with a friendly smile and escorted to our reserved seats, in a hall decorated with small film posters, mostly of a sci-fi nature. The atmosphere was friendly and appreciative and there is always a good community spirit at Writtle. Drinks were on sale and music played in the background. The programme was attractively designed with a lot of interesting information.

#### **Set Construction / Set Painting**

The black drapes were the obvious choice for enclosing this set, as there were a number of different locations to be staged. A screen had been placed in the first act to hide a doorway needed for the further scenes. The screen had some abstract painting representing medical items. The black drapes were very prominent and served to dull down the whole look, and for a comedy the set needed some lightness.

The small stage was used to good effect. Various boxes were very cleverly incorporated throughout the production to accommodate a multitude of different furniture, and these adapted well to being used as a bed, a table and chairs and a desk. The boxes enabled fast scene changes so the pace of the play was not held up.

An interesting panel had been constructed to imply the robots control system; this was well made and achieved the right look, even though it did take up a lot of space.

#### **Lighting Design and Operation**

With such a small stage lighting can be very difficult. The lighting crew had achieved good general cover, and we both liked the candelabra used in the hotel scene.

#### **Sound Design and Operation**

Music when used appeared on cue with good choices made to enhance the scenes.

## **Costumes**

Obviously thought had gone into selecting the costumes, however, we did not quite understand the logic of so much coordination in the colour choices with a black and red pallet used so much. Additional colours and a more futuristic style would have lifted the look. The choices, however, clearly reflected the characters and in this respect worked.

## **CAST**

### **Adam Trainsmith – Ben Fraser**

Ben makes a very handsome hero. He is confident and moved about the stage with ease. He is able to enhance his delivery with good body language and movement; however, his hand gestures did become distracting, as he seemed unable to deliver a line without some gesture, which ultimately became a slight distraction. Hand gestures are a good way of enhancing dialogue, but he needs to be aware they can become a habit. Ben used his voice well, quietening it for emotional scenes but remaining clearly spoken. This was a nice performance.

### **Chandler Tate – Neil Smith**

As the faded film director, Neil gave a convincing performance. He had found a very convincing American accent, which he sustained throughout. His strong performance covered every aspect of frustration, anger and useless shouting. We both really enjoyed this realistic performance.

### **Lester Trainsmith, Hotel Clerk, Waiter – Daniel Curley**

Whenever Daniel appeared on stage he lifted the action of the play to another level. As Lester, his shaking hands and expressive face conveyed much, without saying a word, and when he did speak as this character his voice was pitched just right. This was very different from his other two characters. With these he created great little cameos, and not only showed his versatility as an actor, his talent and timing for comedy, but he also brought out the satire in the piece - Well done.

### **Doctor, Farmer, Man in dress shop, Turkey – Andy Millward**

Difficult to make these roles different, but Andy managed this with style. We were both impressed with the way Andy changed his whole persona with each different character. He really committed himself to each person he was asked to portray. His voice and body language changed and at times I thought it was another actor on stage.

### **Marmion, waiter and technician – Michelle Moody**

Tall and very glamorous Michele's Marmion looked great and futuristic (we liked her futuristic costume). Speaking for her boss she was clearly spoken and made a pleasant addition to the cast.

### **Jacie Triplthree – Elaine Reynolds**

As the naïve actoroid Jacie, Elaine was animated and enthusiastic. She has a very enchanting manner and engaging smile. At times she was quite captivating, but whenever she had to become more emotional in her character the pitch of her voice was a little too high and ultimately lost some of the expression in her tone.

**Trudie Floote, Girl in dress shop – Clare Williams**

Giving a good support to the team, Clare gave a good solid performance as the technician Trudie and quite irate as the girl trying to buy an outfit.

**Prim Spring – Sharon Goodwin**

Sharon's Prim was another good supporting role, she managed the rather cynical technician with confidence and ease. Both Sharon and Clare created a good double act.

**Carla Pepperbloom – Liz Curley**

Bossy and rather aggressive, Carla controls a television studio. Liz was confident and stern faced. However, the power of her performance was lessened as we both felt that her 'bottle blonde' wig swamped her features. We understood the logic of using a wig, and the choice of costume to empower her, but then she needed to have strong make-up to complete the look.

**Mother, Farmer. Wife, Prostitute – Jean Speller**

Jean managed her three characters with ease, giving each of them quite different personas. We particularly liked her interpretation of the prostitute.

**Son, Dress shop assistant – Shelley Goodwin**

My colleague wondered why the son actoroid faced backstage, and then we knew why, Shelley is far too attractive to convince us she is a boy!! She was also nicely animated as the shop assistant.

**Production**

For the first scene with large furniture to accommodate and the number of actors required on stage, space was at a premium, movement was therefore restricted with a lot of standing in a line at the front. However, in spite of this and for the most-part, movement was logical and well executed. The set served the actors well, although it did appear as though decisions had been made to accommodate the action of the play, but more could have been achieved with the overall style to take the eye from the severe black drapes. Costumes defined and enhanced the characters, but there was very little to imply a futuristic atmosphere. The characters were interestingly portrayed by everyone concerned even though the pace and punch of the dialogue needed to be lifted at times.

**Conclusion**

This is not a play I had come across before and on reflection I feel it is one that appears simpler on the page than it may be in production. An interesting and challenging play to produce, not least of which the various locations that needed to be represented. This the team did well to deliver, particularly the use of the black boxes.

As a comedy this production did not consistently hit the right mark. This play is more of a satirical piece and needed additional elements of this style of playing to bring out the humour, particularly at the start, when a clearer definition between the actoroids and the humans would have been intriguing to watch. As the play progressed the humour was more evident and the actors seemed to relax into the piece. There were some good performances from this group, especially by those who had to take on more than one part. Each cast member delivered with obvious commitment and sincerity, creating interesting characters.