

# **NORTH ESSEX THEATRE GUILD**

## **FULL LENGTH FESTIVAL 2010 – 11**

### **ADJUDICATION**

<b>Group</b>	<i>Writtle CARDS</i>
<b>Venue</b>	<i>Writtle Village Hall</i>
<b>Date of Adj.</b>	<i>22 July 2011</i>
<b>Production</b>	<i>East Lynne</i>
<b>Director</b>	<i>Daniel Curley</i>
<b>Adjudicated by</b>	<i>Jenny Burke</i>
<b>Accompanied by</b>	<i>Sara Green</i>

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

Front of house were courteous and friendly, and our seats had been assigned. There was a good sized audience on the night we attended; it is a real pleasure to see a local group supported in this way.

The good atmosphere was enhanced by the display of pictures around the walls. There were a number of old Victorian prints and pictures of the cast, which had been framed in cut out ornate gold frames, these really set the tone for this costume drama – a nice touch.

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

The box set was painted in a neutral colour, with the addition of coloured panels covered in a modern representation of a Victorian patterned paper in a plumb colour. The only piece of furniture permanently set on stage was a chaise.

#### **Props**

Minimum props were required. All were in keeping with the style of the period. The representation of a dressing table with mirror was very well done and cleverly achieved an authentic look.

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

Much of the action of the play took place at the front of the stage, but the lighting seemed to light the back in more detail. There was also an area centre stage that was not light, which meant that as the actors moved across the stage they constantly went in and out of light.

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

The pre-show and scene change music choice was good. The waltz set the tone well, although it would have been nice to vary the number to add variety.

## **Costumes**

The costumes were colourful and interesting, with some really splendid outfits, but not entirely consistent in appearance or period look. Both my colleague and I agreed that it seemed the actors with smaller roles predominantly wore the best costumes, and the principle characters were not always the best, which was a pity. In particular, Isobel's costume was very pale and added to this the white blouse was stark under the bright stage lights. Archibald's jacket was very modern looking; a morning coat for him would have been better.

There were some really splendid period costumes, which enhanced the look and added colour and variety to the overall appearance.

## **CAST**

### **Lady Isabel Vane – Laura Bennett**

This was a very sincere performance. Laura has good diction and spoke her dialogue beautifully. She was able to carry us through the story as it unfolded and she held our attention the whole time. Convincingly portraying different emotions, not only the disappointments and distress at the ever-changing circumstances of her life, but also her joy as well. Laura has a lovely smile that lights up her whole face. Her final scene was very moving. This was a lovely performance that we both enjoyed – well done.

### **Emma Vane – Josephine Curley**

Josephine gave the play a great start with a forceful and striking performance. She played the nasty relative with great relish and created a perfect contrast to Lady Isabel. Josephine has a very impressive stage presence.

### **Archibald Carlyle – Andy Millward**

Andy portrayed a good but unobservant man well. Initially his performance was a little hesitant and some of his gestures were awkward, but gradually he seemed to relax into the part and ultimately he gained our sympathy when we realised how much he loved Isabel. Very moving.

### **Captain Francis Levison – Ben Fraser**

Ben makes a very attractive leading man; he also created a believable character. He has a natural stage presence and was entirely at ease throughout the performance. His body language and facial expressions convincingly communicated his thoughts and intentions. He interacted well with Laura and their scenes together had great sincerity.

### **Cornelia Carlyle – Liz Curley**

Liz was very good at conveying innuendo. Her body language and facial expressions said all that her words left out.

### **Barbara Hare – Paulette Harris**

Paulette has good diction and certainly created a very imposing character.

**Joyce – Sharon Goodwin**

Good interpretation of the character of the warm-hearted servant. Sharon created a very endearing character.

**Wilson – Michele Moody**

Good example of the knowing look. We knew that she knew without a word being spoken!

**Afy – Clare Williams**

A small role that Clare portrayed well – the gossiping sister who had no idea what she was giving away.

**Mrs Crosby – Jan Irving**

Jan looked wonderful in her costume. She conveyed great meaning, but she could have given more volume and projection to her speeches.

**Creditor – Shelley Goodwin**

Shelley has a tendency to speak very fast and sometimes it was not easy to follow her dialogue. However, she portrayed her character with great energy and spirit, and she moved about the stage with purpose.

**James Williams & Lacy Charlesworth & Jack Charlesworth**

All three played their parts with sincerity and helped to create the right mood in the play. Together with Megan Hill as the servant.

**Production**

It is always a compromise to create a set that can accommodate so many different locations. In this instance the set was pleasing on the eye, clean and served the play well. It certainly worked well for the interior scenes. It did not work quite so well for the scenes located outside. The side panels could have been given a different paint effect and this would have created depth on stage and would have blended with the variety of locations being depicted in the storyline.

The decision to set the chaise on stage inevitably created a number of difficulties. Whenever the whole ensemble was gathered they had to negotiate the chaise. There is no doubt that it would have been impossible to bring this on during the play, but as it only had real relevance for the scene with the dying child an alternative could perhaps have been adopted. Most of the action took place at the front of the stage and movement back and forth was restricted quite a bit. The additional tables and chairs were placed at the front to one side or the other and once again movement was restricted. Without the chaise set centre stage, and if the additional furniture had been placed further back, blocking could have had more variety. However, on the whole, movement within the space provided had been given thought and relevance. The mock dressing table was a very clever piece of furniture. It did however almost completely block out the maid. This was a lovely scene, played well by the actress, yet from our view we never saw her face as she hardly moved across the stage throughout her piece.

The director's hand was evident in the style and pace of this production, as well as in the interpretation of the script. There was a real sense of ensemble playing from the whole cast. Characters were well defined. The difference between upstairs and downstairs was clear and the story line played strongly making it easy to follow. For the most part the cast observed the courtesies of the period, with only a few exceptions; including the scene in Boulogne when the Captain failed to hold the chair for Isabel to sit. He merely indicated it. These gestures help to set the right period.

We were very impressed with the whole cast in their movement on stage whenever they were required to under-score various points within the play. The cast had been well rehearsed and the movements were well executed by all concerned; once again the director's influence was evident. Their involvement achieved a high impact and enhanced the storyline in a very creative manner. Equally well thought out were the scene changes. Furniture was brought on and off stage with immense precision. The avoidance of continual blackouts was refreshing. This created continuity and the pace of the play was not broken, a trap that so many productions of this type fall into.

## **Conclusion**

The cast created interesting characters and the whole group were energetic and enthusiastic in their performances. Although there were some inconsistencies these did not detract from our overall appreciation of the work and commitment of all concerned with this production.

Thank you for an enjoyable evening.  
Jenny Burke