

Writtle Cards' "Life Goes On"

Writtle Cards, October 26, 2006

Life Goes On – Directed by Bill Piggott

Reviewer – Stewart Adkins

This was a delightful comedy that had moments of poignancy, drama and lust but with love and morality as the central themes. The two brothers were polar opposites; George was calm, passive, contented and very much in love with his wife, despite her constant exhortations to achieve something; Mike was high energy, active yet fundamentally dissatisfied with his life, this being manifest by serial affairs and an exaggerated taste for the bottle. The actors playing these roles captured the essence of their characters well, with a relaxed and tolerant approach by George and a more manic, stressed outlook by Mike. The expressions on Mike's face, especially the glint in his eyes when he was offered sex on a plate by not just one but two sisters (although, in the name of decency I stress that these were on separate occasions!) were highly amusing. How much did he pay to get that part? Drunk scenes are always difficult to do since there is a fine line between comedy and pantomime; lack of inhibition is one thing but having the wherewithal to seduce his girlfriend's sister requires a degree of stamina (I imagine!) that alcohol tends to dilute. However, all three sisters were exceptionally attractive, even the angry Helen, no doubt Mike's libido was higher than most and this scene worked well. Helen portrayed the assertive City woman with little time for commitment very well, showing appropriate highs and lows, flashes of anger and even the odd tender moment. Debbie, the passive little sister, played the more extensive love scenes with Mike without self-consciousness and without irony and was an excellent foil for Mike. Joyce, the big sister and newly widowed, had perhaps the most difficult role of the three sisters. She captured the relentless but fruitless nagging of George without tipping into unpleasantness; this was partly due to George's cheerful and artful dodging of the responsibilities Joyce wished to push on him but the two made an entirely credible couple. This was reinforced by the quite moving soliloquy towards the middle of the second Act when Joyce was talking to her dead husband and George, unseen and unheard as a ghost, was reacting in the background. George's brief reincarnation had a purpose, which became apparent only at the end of the play, when George and Joyce combined forces, unwittingly, to rebuild Mike's self-esteem. George's ghostly interventions in Mike's quest for slaking his lust with Debbie set Mike on a straighter moral path and Joyce's deep-seated need to organize lead her to turn around Mike's aborted career as a wannabe film producer. Thus it was that George, in a curious role reversal, managed to achieve in death what he could not achieve in life. And Mike, the failed film producer, became a success. This was an enjoyable evening out with some good performances, nicely balanced, played on a simple stage with enough props and scenery to create the image of a living room, spare bedroom and landing. Well done to all .