

Society: APS: Amateur Players of Sherborne

Venue: Paddock Garden

Production: Waiting for Godot

Author: Samuel Beckett

Director: Jerome Swan

Date seen: Saturday 12th September 2020

SHOW REPORT

'Waiting for Godot' is frequently considered a difficult play, largely because it defies so many of our expectations of theatre. There are few characters, little scenery and the playwright flatly refused to comment as to its meaning, leaving a text which is entirely open to the interpretation of the actors and their director. The programme for this production includes an excellent and comprehensive introduction (Martin Williams) which sets intellectual hares running in all directions.

Imagine our delight, then, at being treated to a production which was light and airy, the most creative and entertaining I have seen. This was a fresh and intelligent exploration of the human condition, a novel and contemporary interpretation of Beckett's play which speaks to its mid-Covid audience with the inventive use of props and action to make compelling viewing.

Situation and characters were strongly-drawn, so that we were drawn into their limbo-like existence but were not stupefied by it. The unchanging scenery (a dead tree, a tree-stump and a patch of artificial grass) might elsewhere have become tedious, but the characters inhabited their space and took advantage of all its possibilities. Diction was faultless, not a word was lost, as every syllable was clearly enunciate and projected with warmth and feeling above the Saturday-sound of the town, the young Boy matching the more experienced actors with his skill.

Costumes and props were used to good effect, with the almost-incontinent Vladimir's (Martin Williams) shirt tails escaping through his open flies; Estragon's (Carl Davies) efforts to remove and replace his boots were augmented by the use of sanitizer spray; Vladimir sprayed the fragments of carrot and swede before giving them to Estragon to eat and the comment "Let's not do anything, it's safer" had a whole new resonance.

National Operatic and Dramatic Association

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Hurling themselves onto the stone paving slabs, seemingly disregarding the pain (it must have hurt) this was a fearless performance, socially-distanced, too, as the actors used ropes to simultaneously connect and distance themselves in a commedia-style knock-about; an embrace was an elbow-bump and Lucky's (Graham Smith) fluttering dance eccentric; Vladimir and Estragon were energetic from start to finish. Each actor was entirely committed to their character, so that the audience was empathetic of Estragon's sore feet and his fear of sleeping; of Vladimir's determination and his need to wait; of Pozzo's (Adrian Harding) passion and his desperate need of encouragement and of the strangely influential Lucky's miserable situation; the arrival of the Boy (Seth Collis) brought freshness and a new light.

This was a production full of energy, light and shade, with a strong sense of fun and playful physicality, but which addressed the depth and complexity of the text with conviction and integrity. An excellent interpretation, most entertaining and thought-provoking, which enhanced my enjoyment of Beckett's text immeasurably.

Sylvia Coates

NODA Representative

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