



Society : Chipperfield Theatre Group
 Production : NELL'S BELLES
 Date : July 2006
 Venue : Chipperfield Village Hall
 Report by :

Report

Josie Shingles, NODA London area 10

What a treat this show was, pure enjoyment from start to finish. A wonderful lively concoction of bawdiness, outrageousness, farce and sauce all rolled into a wonderful evenings entertainment. I just loved the entire company as they portrayed this concept of life as it might have been in those heady bygone days as the whole cast threw themselves into it body and soul.

Director Tricia Richardson has done a brilliant job in bringing out each individual character while at the same time intertwining them with each other, so staging was excellent. **Also producer Jill Summerfield and choreographers Ros Swallow and Lisa Callcut** are also to be congratulated too, especially on such a tiny stage.

Musically too all songs were very well sung with the backing of tapes. A list of musical numbers in the programme would have helped me as I could have individually remarked on each item, so perhaps you might keep this in mind next time.

With such a large cast its not possible to mention everyone, but I will do my best with ones that made a special impact on me.

Sarah Cronin-Stanley as Helena Gwyn and later as the Nurse really is a superb comic actress and stole each scene she appeared in. **Wendy East** made a very believable Nell, full of wit, charm and sauce but compassionate at the same time. The other six Belles were all tremendous and played their parts as though having a ball, which I am sure they were having, while raising the temperature of every red blooded man in the audience, They all had some quick fire humorous lines which were delivered with impeccable timing, as well as dancing and singing extremely well.

As soon as he started to speak I loved **Bill Callcut** as the actor/player Charles Hart; what a wonderful fruity voice. Also loved his deliberate over acting too.

The three charladies were hilarious, great characterisation while acting as narrators to keep the story line flowing. Also the comedy duo **Simon Phillips & Lyn Hug** as Mr & Mrs Chffinch had me in stitches as well as keeping the action rolling merrily along.

Rob Hine was terrific as the randy King Charles and I loved it when he wandered occasionally in the 1960's hippy language, of course unaware that the finale was going to be fast forward to those happy hippy times.

He was greatly assisted by a wonderful **Jenny Heusen** as Queen Catherine who was superb. Loved her accent, mannerisms and ready quips all spoken with great aplomb.

At first I was not sure about **Paul Instrall** as James but he grew on me. Quite a weird and strange fellow, not sure if he was meant to be a nutter or just peculiar, but he carried this all off very well. Of course the finale "streaker" had us all in stitches and what a brave actor!

Was **Imogen Roberts** supposed to be a plain and boring Barbara Villiers? Perhaps the way this part was written but in other period plays of this era she was much more imposing and arrogant.

The Reaper and Ghosts were very funny while all the rest of many people doubled up in various roles helped to pad out this crazy story.

Although all was tremendous enjoyment, my favourite scene has to be the seaside which was truly inspired and wonderful.

Minimum scenery worked well with addition of bits and pieces of set being brought on and off by the cast.

Lighting and Sound were excellent.

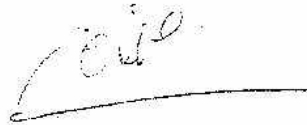
Costumes looked great, especially the ladies ones. Also the whole effect was helped by wonderful wigs and makeup.

Programme was well laid out and informative (except for omission of musical numbers as mentioned previously).

My thanks to **Jill and Adrian** for their warm welcome, also to your committee for inviting me along to do this review.

I look forward to the Pompeii Panto in January and thank you all again for a such a marvellous entertaining evening.

Josie Shingles

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Josie', with a long horizontal line underneath it.