



Society : The Pump House Children & Youth Theatre
 Production : MULTIPLEX & CHATROOM
 Date : July 2006
 Venue :
 Report by : The Pump House Theatre, Watford

Report

Josie Shingles, NODA London area 10

To start with the first play **MULTIPLEX**, a challenge for both director, cast and audience. Direction by Lee Farman and India Barby was fast paced and well timed. Staging plus an excellent lighting design also helped to keep the storyline flowing swiftly and expertly.

All the cast did well with some difficult dialogue and no prompts needed at all. I was very impressed by this also the high level of talent portrayed by your young actors. They soon came across as strong characters in their own right and established who was who quite early on.

King, leader of the pack, was strongly portrayed by Adam Feighoney playing out his fantasies as a film maker, appearing to be a control freak but I think underneath insecure. He needed his henchmen Spike (Duncan Grantham) and Elton (James Bradshaw) to do the dirty work by keeping the rest of the ushers afraid of him. In particular Elton was a bully, and like all bullies was really a coward, with Spike just as bad by egging him on. These two played their roles extremely well as I really detested them.

Then their whole little domain is upset by the arrival of Mouse, brilliantly played by Jon Bolitho-Jones. He started off really understated, meek in body language and demeanour, but gradually through his sheer brain power and knowledge of films overcame the bullies, so the entire struggle of the groups pecking order was altered.

There were some individual brilliant performances from the rest of the cast. I loved the cute little Geach (Ben Rhodes) and his fantasies of being Bud Light-Years, Fish (Sean Lovell) and Jay (Nick Corre) with their great expressive acting, Whiz (Rosie Spearpoint) not sure if she wanted to be a slapper or was it bravado?. I think that Rosie has enormous comedy potential. Also great was Cass (Lauren Murdoch) who fancied King and finally plucked up the courage to actually kiss him, Twiglet (Nikki Carter) into all of the James Bond heros but not sure which one she liked best. Olivia Gunter played Princess very realistically and naturally but I wanted the heavy fringe off her face so could see expressions and reactions more clearly. Oh yes I really loved Jenny Hibberd as the gruesome blood thirsty Mags, with her wild weird facial expressions, actions and fantastic eyes Jenny was scarily wonderful. Unfortunately I sometimes had a problem understanding Adam Webster as the narrator Dillon, but mostly he did well linking the intricate storyline with explanations as to what was happening.

Emily Kiddle did some fine mime as the deaf Jo-jo, but I would have liked Emma Williams playing her interpreter and friend Tash to slow down a bit as she often spoke too fast so difficult to understand.

This play really brought out all the problems of growing up made me glad I was not a teenager any more with all their insecurities.

I would query your choice of play, although I do consider myself very broadminded. The high content of extremely bad language could be offensive to some people and personally I would not have liked any of my children or grandchildren to have been on the stage or in the audience. However the actors seemed quite unfazed by all of this so perhaps I am wrong.

Second we had **CHATROOM** - very different but equally relevant of today's youth. Expertly directed by Roger Martin and again a difficult subject to cover. We all know the perils and dangers of this type of thing with young people's fragile minds so easily manipulated, but to see it happen was quite scary.

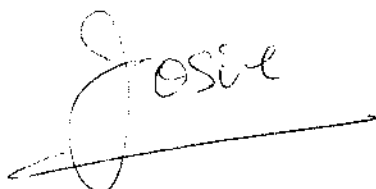
Emily Bannister started off well as Laura, a sort of Samaritan, a good listener for Jim who finally (I think and hope) became a real life friend. I thought Greg Fahey was terrific as Jim, he gave a wonderful sensitive performance as the lonely sad young man whose tragic early life had left him so depressed he was contemplating suicide. I wanted to put my arms round him and his portrayal was so powerful he made me cry.

Equally I hated the cruel sadistic William, played very cleverly by Dominic Powell. He started off by being quite a normal cynical teenager, angry with life and his elders, but later this had sinister undertones as he and Eva (Jenny Clifford) plotted to destroy Jim. It was chilling to see how easily this sort of thing could happen, and all praise to Dominic and Jenny for their realistic acting. Jenny did need a lot of prompts though plus I would have liked her to keep her face to the audience (screen) more instead of looking down a lot. I really warmed to Rebecca Harrington as Jack who came across as very kind, trying to put a stop to what the others were doing, also Isabel Vaughan as Emily who was kind and sincere, but much too weak to stand up to her nasty friends.

Who would I like to be my internet friend? Probably Laura or Jack. Again as with the other play glad I am not a teenager anymore, especially in these difficult insecure times. Lighting was especially good for both plays and well done to all of the people involved with that aspect. Sound too was excellent. Set was minimal but effective, while the on screen film set and production was very impressive. Programme was basic but informative.

I must thank you for asking me to review these plays and please pass on my admiration to your company for all their hard work in putting this production on. I really did enjoy them both as so very different from anything I have ever seen before. Also thanks to Lee and Roger for their warm welcome. I look forward to Death of a Salesman in September, a play I know very well indeed.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Josie". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the bottom of the name.