

BEDROOM FARCE

By Alan Ayckbourn performed by Haslingfield Little Theatre.

The play's title is somewhat of a misnomer as this is not a farce as such. Here "farce" relies on the comedy of character. Each actor takes their turn to invite the audience to laugh at their absurdity. The story centres round four married couples. Each, it emerges, has problems.

Malcolm and Kate are having a party and have invited, amongst others, Nick & Jan and Trevor & Susannah. Nick is bed-ridden with a strained back and, therefore, cannot attend, even though his wife Jan (and Trevor's ex) does. Meanwhile Trevor's parents are getting ready to celebrate their wedding anniversary with an annual trip to their favourite restaurant.

On stage three bedrooms presented simultaneously belonging to three separate couples' homes with the action flowing in and out from one to the other during one hectic night. This is the challenge for any group putting on this well-loved Ayckbourn play. Although the Haslingfield stage is fairly small, the three bedroom settings were well defined and the limited space was used to best advantage. Upwardly-mobile Nick and Jan's bed was neatly angled, Ernest and Delia's room was suitably furnished and Malcolm and Kate's bedroom messily chaotic with wallpaper samples tacked to the wall awaiting decorating decision. The cast, especially Malcolm and Kate, each used their own virtually 6ft of space most impressively.

Ernest and Delia **John Beresford** and **Terry Baker** were a good pairing. We enjoyed a fine performance from Delia who made good use of the opportunity for business in and around the bedroom. Ernest gave us a very natural performance: here was an actor clearly at ease with his role.

Matt Dyer as Nick, in bed with a bad back, was first-rate. He had good timing and his delivery was spot on. Not an easy role when one is either in bed or face down on the bedroom floor but Mr Dyer made it his own. **Maria Scrivener** as Jan made much of her character as she dealt with Nick's demands in a suitably unsympathetic and caustic manner.

Malcolm and Kate **James Thomas** and **Jo Randall** preparing for their housewarming party had a good opening scene, although the imposed limit on space meant the scene was less frenetic than required but they worked very well together. They made a very believable couple and I am sure many related to Malcolm's problem with locking bar C; and full marks to Jo on her accomplishment of getting fully dressed under the duvet.

Weaving in and out of the bedrooms are Trevor and Susannah's marital disasters. **Fiona Musto-King** as the neurotic Susannah gave a good performance: and **Phil Chapman** gave us a suitably dithery Trevor. He had got the measure of his character well. An excellent performance. I am sure though that I was not the only one who was glad not to live with these two!

Bedroom Farce is set in the 1970s and the costumes and set dressing depicted this very well indeed. In fact, this play is a challenge all round not least for the lighting and sound technicians, the cue sheet must be a long one. They had a couple of gremlins running around on the opening night but overall it was well-controlled in both areas. Good choice of ring tones for the three pre-mobile era phones.

Director **Bic Baker** can be pleased and proud of his cast. He did a splendid job with this play which has some of the best one-liners Ayckbourn has written, many of which were probably eagerly anticipated by those familiar with the play including the collapse of the Malcolm's dreadful anniversary present. This was a well-cast, well-paced production of a very funny play. Thank you for an extremely enjoyable evening of theatre which was a fitting tribute to the memory of Sonya Moran.

Julie Petrucci
NODA East Regional Representative.
District 4 South