

Barton Players

AN IDEAL HUSBAND

Directed by Keith Badham

Barton Village Hall - Friday April 12th 2013

This is a challenging four act play which could present a daunting task for amateurs. However Barton Players rose to the challenge.

The play demands four sets. This was achieved simply but effectively. Colour was added to the action through costumes. They really were excellent, and added a richness and opulence which was entirely appropriate to the period and setting.

Act 1 demands some exposition about character. This is given in written stage notes in the script but the director took the unusual step of having the butler Mason, deliver this directly to the audience. This helped exposition. However, Mason, as played by Harold Liberty, then seemed out of sync with the tone of the piece. His melodramatic style, line delivery behind a raised hand for example, was in discord with the naturalistic style of the remainder of the play. The pace in Act 1 was somewhat slow, cues needed to be sharper to give more energy to the piece. However further acts remedied this and there were some excellent moments throughout the play. Act 4 had very good pace and much variety.

Jason Wolfe's performance as Sir Robert Chiltern developed as the play progressed. After a somewhat hesitant beginning in Act 1 he grew in confidence. His speech at the end of Act 2 was very well delivered and thoroughly believable. Sir Robert is a creature of duty and this came over well but when emotions broke through Jason was very convincing. Thomas George as Lord Goring was excellent. He was a very confident performer who appeared utterly relaxed on stage, delivered and timed his lines well. He captured perfectly the aplomb and style of Goring. Phipps, Phillip Hargreaves added much humour with his rigidly formal and well timed responses. Michael George as Lord Caversham provided good support. His scene with Lord Goring in Act 3 was very well played.

This play demands strong females also. Laura Scott gave a first class performance as Lady Chiltern. She captured well the restrained, dignified and virtuous nature of the character. Laura also looked wonderful on stage, she wore the costumes with grace and style. Of course Mrs Cheveley is the opposite to Lady Chiltern. She is a woman of the world, a woman of

notoriety with a somewhat unsavoury past reputation, a seducer of men. Rachael Bowie was able to capture the manipulative quality of the character and was especially believable in Act 3 but her seductive nature could have been more strongly emphasized especially in Act 1 with sir Robert. Chloe Godin as Mabel performed with confidence. Mabel is a forthright and determined young woman, who is resolved on marrying Lord Goring. I would have liked to have seen more of this tenacity and determination in Chloe's line delivery, this would also have provided a more vivid foil to Lord Goring. Deborah Radcliffe's performance as Lady Markby added much humour to the play. Deborah had good voice projection and diction, her grand manner and bearing were entirely fitting for this role. Finally, Tracey McNevin's cameo role as Mrs Marchmont was excellent, I loved her delightful laugh.

This was a very successful production which became more engrossing as the play progressed. The Barton Players and Keith Badham are to be congratulated on their courage and skill in presenting a demanding play to such a high standard.

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