

Penny Plain TC - The Much Improved Hamlet

This was my first visit to Penny Plain but after their article in the NODA News I felt that I must go along and see for myself. This was definitely theatre with a difference as the unsuspecting people of Ilkley found out. It isn't often, on a wet and windy August afternoon, that you are accosted by individuals from a travelling theatre group from 1853 and persuaded to watch a slightly abridged version of Hamlet, whilst keeping an eye open for their missing carthorse, also called Hamlet. The action both on and off stage had been very cleverly thought out and there were some excellent and amusing performances from the cast. This was good entertainment from a talented group and I look forward to their next venture.

Harrogate DS with Harrogate Band - Brassd Off

Report by Geoff Turner
Director Paul Dunstan

It was a privilege and a pleasure to deputise for Pam at the Society's opening production of the 64th season – and what an opener! The Society joined forces with the Harrogate Band and the combination of their considerable talents ensured a production that oozed professionalism and quality from curtain up to the last note of 'Land of Hope and Glory'. Society President Brian Foster, as the band conductor Danny, led the exceptional cast. They all extracted humour and pathos in equal measure, as we shared the suffering faced by the miners in 1994; and they even learned to 'play' their instruments! It was a terrific evening; or in the miners' vernacular, it was f-----fantastic!

Ripon Rowel Players - The Farndale Avenue Housing Estate Townswomen's Guild Dramatic Society Murder Mystery

Producer / Choreographer Audrey Hewson

It's difficult enough to direct a play and learn parts when you are wanting the finished product to look right but when the idea is to make it look as if it is all going wrong then the job is twice as hard. Ripon Rowel made a splendid effort with this play and had the audience laughing throughout. A strong cast had to portray not only their characters in the Murder Mystery but also as members of the Townswomen's Guild. Well done to lighting and sound as their jobs are equally difficult and have to be spot on to add to the chaos. The simple set worked well, or rather it didn't, but it wasn't meant to! A good evening's entertainment

Otley Little Theatre - Daisy Pulls It Off (Report by Leslie Appleyard)

Director Gill Coverdale

OLT had to change plays at short notice so, undaunted, the ladies donned school uniforms again, albeit in 1927 style and, like Daisy, managed to pull it off. A delightful Daisy (Rosean Smith) from an elementary school background eventually won over the snobbish, upper class 'gels' of Grangewood School, by being a paragon of virtue and all round good egg, eagerly aided by her chum Trixie (Jilly Clatworthy) who truly captured the comical gawky mannerisms required. The Headmistress (Joan Birkett) was suitably austere, with perfect deportment and manner. There was an amusing hockey match and Daisy's dramatic rescue of the bullying Sybil and toady Monica (Van Eyles-Owen and Ruth Birkett). An appropriate atmosphere was set by the music of the School Pianist (Phil Marston).

Garforth ADS - Forget Me Knot

Director Pam Hill

A small cast of only four but fortunately a talented foursome who kept the pace of the play going and managed to squeeze as much humour as they could from the dialogue. Well done to lighting and sound as they were spot on with all their effects, helping the action to flow smoothly. The set had been kept plain and simple but combined with suitable props made for an ideal police station and the use of the front of the hall gave an extra dimension to the area. This was a well directed play and seemed to be enjoyed by an enthusiastic audience.

Otley Little Theatre - Robinson Crusoe and the Pirates

Producer Charmian Thomas

This was a good family show with all the necessary ingredients needed in a pantomime. There were plenty of opportunities for the youngsters to shout and sing and the capacity audience enjoyed it immensely. There was some excellent dancing from the two groups of dancers and they were a delight to watch. The strong cast made the most of the comedy and kept the show moving at a good pace. Costumes were excellent and the set was well designed. The Guiseley Jazz Band provided some lively music but chorus singing was a little weak at times. A good evening's entertainment with an enjoyable traditional panto.

Harrogate DS - How The Other Half Loves

Director Sylvia Iveson

This was good vintage Ayckbourn, presented at its very best. A strong cast of six found every ounce of humour and pathos in the script. All the parts were played with great skill and thought but I think Derek Newton as the dithering but well meaning Frank won the hearts of the audience. As with many Ayckbourn plays you find yourself laughing one minute and crying the next and only a cast fully in tune with the script can achieve this. This is a difficult set to deal with, and in such a small area even harder, but it worked well with skilful direction of the cast. This was quality entertainment and a joy to watch.