



Be inspired by amateur theatre

The Vicar of Dibley
Queen's Hall Theatre, Cranbrook
Friday 15th April 2022
Director: Louisa Nelson-Chambers
Assistant: Katie Kember

The answer to Louisa's question in her Director's Notes was a resounding 'Yes' – the question being 'was it wise to do a much-loved show.' This was an Easter treat, well supported and deliciously irreverent! By kind permission of Richard Curtis this wonderful stage play adapted by CODS covered the anticipated arrival of an incumbent vicar to the parish of Dibley and the councillor's initial disapproval as it was a woman!! Wonderful parish council meetings in the village hall, Geraldine's first sermon, verger Alice's swooning over Hugo, only son of David Horton MBE, Mrs Letty Cropley's ghastly culinary efforts, farmer Owen's bowel movements, Jim's terrific 'yes, no' interludes, the substantial increase of the Lent collection particularly from Owen's colourful language, his proposal of marriage to the vicar, I can't believe it's butter section, Gerry's jokes that Alice never understood, and after much coaxing and hinting the illuminated nuptials of Alice to Hugo. And finally, the call from the Bishop to send her off to Liverpool. Peals of laughter resounded from beginning to end of the performance. On a serious note, we even sang an uplifting 'Immortal, Invisible, God only Wise' with the words printed at the back of our programmes.

The proceedings commenced with choristers stumbling through the gold curtain both in spotlight, singing the 23rd Psalm 'The Lord is My Shepherd' so familiar to the opening of the popular TV series and sung this time by Annie Hatcher with pigtails and multi-tasking housekeeper/chorister/wedding crasher Sarah Hutchings.

The stage was clearly divided with village hall table and chairs angled to stage left, David Horton's posh front room into the Vicarage stage right with a small front of curtain rostrum built to represent the Vestry. SM Mark Jeffrey plus Brian Hobson were slick in their operations as were the lighting and sound team – well cued noises off and excellent props including beautiful wedding bouquet with carrots! Sharon Pickles not only played an amusing, enthusiastic slightly bonkers Mrs Cropley but headed the wardrobe department with input from the cast too.

An eye-catching front cover in black and gold A5 programme was created, with print for pleasurable reading. The publicity posters had a lovely cheeky appearance of Siana Weston through a Church door donning cassock with dog collar, and from a pulpit addressing her sermon and who created a first-class 'chocolate lover' Gerry. In real life we may have seen her disguised as the Easter Bunny! Excellent mannerisms, a tug of the cardigan, and pointed finger, a quick step and a sparkle. As a team the really strong cast worked very well together under the leadership of Louisa, assisted by new to directing Katie. Robin Harrison played a

haughty, serious, stuck in his ways David Horton eventually accepting both Gerry and Alice. Matthew Sims played the downtrodden Hugo who got his girl in the end. For her first play with CODS what a splendid Alice Springs Tinker was created by Jess Leaper - the child like keenness, her innocence, not getting it reactions, her wonderful garb and the amazing wedding ceremony. Frank Pickle the minute taker sporting a bowtie ably played by Steve Smith, was obviously well suited having served as Secretary on various rugby committees! What can I say about James Harper last seen as Dame Nanny Nora now playing a foul mouthed, smelly farmer who certainly boosted the Lent collection! Great characterisation too. Another first time with CODS was the wonderful Adam Button from Folkestone, who was Jim Trott for a second time – so very funny both in appearance and accent and his no, no, no, yes interludes first class. This play was most certainly a convincing, well produced, paced and exceedingly funny experience. Thankyou all for the huge effort made to create such a result.

A shortened report will be available on the NODA SE website very shortly.

Anne Lawson
Regional Representative
NODA SE District 3

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