

BOVINGDON PLAYERS
“COLD COMFORT FARM”

Director: Stewart Woodward

Bovingdon Memorial Hall

24th – 26th November 2011

Cold Comfort Farm was a rather strange play – and I will admit that I did not like the actual play – I found it difficult to follow at times. However, there were some good performances and several first timers who made a good showing.

Director Stewart Woodward got some very telling characterisations from his cast, although the accents were sometimes a little difficult to follow – as there was so much enthusiasm there that the actual words got a little lost on occasion.

The set was very good – an excellent portrayal of a neglected farmhouse kitchen – very sturdy (which was needed as there were lots of quick exits and slamming of doors) – there was hardly a shake seen – which is always the sign of a well-constructed set. The use of the apron in front of tabs for the garden of Haute couture Hall and run across afterwards was well-thought out.

The Meeting Place scene was good – plenty of energy and interaction between the ensemble and Amos – which created another contrast within the play.

Leaving the church also worked well – and gave the audience another dimension with the cast converging on the stage.

Laura Moore as Flora Poste, the main character had a lot of words, but delivered them well – and kept the pace going. She had a clarity of speech and expression that lent itself well to the 1930's feel of the play. She certainly looked the part and behaved in the correct manner for the era.

The sound effects were rather too loud to be realistic, and instead of dying away at times for example the plane noise came to an abrupt halt, and Aunt Ada's cries were overwhelming at times, if they had been a little quieter it would have made the whole thing more believable. The storm effect would also have been more realistic if it had rumbled on very quietly for a while, but again it stopped quite abruptly. Just small things, but when everyone was working hard to get a real feel to the piece these small things don't ring true.

Liz Lewis was very good as Rennet – she did well to get completely soaked, no mean feat, and her facial expressions were just right. She eventually came into her own when she found love (or was it lust!)

Sean Chalkwright was a perfectly correct Charles – good slightly upper class accent, but not too much over the top. He got the slightly gung-ho attitude that young pilots would have had in the 30's.

Robert Peacock as Amos looked like the old fire and brimstone preachers, and certainly delivered his sermon and lines in that genre – which was great – a very

imposing character at all times introducing another completely different dimension to the play, which lifted the action.

I liked Ben Hooker's Reuben – he succeeded in being the most normal of the sons - and I liked his slightly diffident manner when speaking to Flora at the end.

Mark Waghorn was a delightfully butch Seth – excellent posturing – he certainly looked the part and acted well.

The third brother was the slightly wild Urk – played by Michael Swietochowski, a little too wild at times, as the words became unclear – but a good contrast to the other brothers.

Andrew Jamieson as Earl Neck, the film producer, got the accent just right, not too over the top – but needed to vary his voice tone slightly in places, as it stayed on the same note for too long, which lost the expression and meaning of some of the lines.

Penny Coombs was a very posh Mrs Hawk-Monitor – with lovely costumes and a super hairdo. She looked and acted the part to a 'T'. Andy Lloyd as her son also adopted the right sort of accent and swagger, another good first performance.

Lamorna Hooker as the ethereal Elfine again was costumed just right, which added to the charm of the character, a delightful first performance. The only gripe I had was that much was made of going to London to get her hair done – but the resulting hairdo was not particularly 'London' – although it did suit the character very well.

Barbara Bonney was a very forceful Aunt Ada – she played up to the rest of the cast well, and created a cranky old lady very well.

I liked Iain King's Adam Lambsbreath – the first scene he was in where he was milking the cow with the wooden leg was very amusing.

The chorus of villagers etc were noisy and added much to the general ambience, although perhaps a little manic at times!!

There were some excellent props – the plant for example – and all the kitchen paraphernalia plus personal props – well thought out and used, and mostly the costumes were good and suitable for the actors and the parts they were playing.

This was one of those plays that you ended up wondering about, as I said at the beginning, I didn't like the play very much and the sound effects were not all they should have been – but it was redeemed by some good performances, good costumes and great set.

Thanks to Bovingdon for their hospitality good to catch up with you again – and hope that next season will be a good one – I look forward to seeing Mark Waghorn's new thriller!