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It's all 'confusions' at Downham!

Problems of communication and breakdowns in personal relationships are the underlying themes of "Confusions", an evening of five short plays by Alan Ayckbourn performed by Stage Two Downham at Downham Village Hall from April 2nd to 5th at 7-30 pm. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the founding of the group and this entertaining evening should showcase the group's talents. The plays present us with a stay-at-home mum whose life has been taken over by car for the children, a husband away on business attempting to chat up two young girls,

two couples in a restaurant whose evening is less than successful, a village fête where everything that can go wrong does and five people in the park trying to converse. The plays are very cleverly written and very funny. Tickets at £6 can be obtained from Tourist Information 01200 425566 or from Fran Osborne 01200 423301.

The Assheton Arms in Downham is also repeating the very successful meal deal for £22 including a ticket for the show. For this offer please phone the Assheton Arms 01200 441227.

Nothing 'confusing' about quality drama

Audiences have been treated to a superb evening of entertainment courtesy of Alan Ayckbourn and Stage Two Downham Drama Group, ably produced by Gerry Purchase and Kim Croydon.

The simple stage set was well designed and easily adapted for each individual scenario, and the lighting and sound effects perfectly co-ordinated. Well done to the whole team!

"Confusions" consists of a quintet of interlinked one act plays, each dealing with human eccentricities and dilemmas, with hilarious and thought provoking results.

"Mother Figure" featured Lucy (Carol Baird) as a harassed mother trying to cope with small children in the absence of her wayward husband.

As a result of the lack of adult company she proceeds to treat her concerned neighbours, Rosemary and Terry (Samantha Smith and Chris Bowers) as children, reducing them to quivering obedience.

The characters were totally convincing and very funny.

"Drinking Companion" is a sequence in the life of Lucy's husband, Harry (Robert Crane) as he tries to "chat up" Paula (Suesi Windle) in a bar, whilst on his travels as a commercial rep.

The facial expressions of Paula and her friend Bernice (Kella Bowers) were a joy to watch, as they listened to

the incessant, inane drivel fluently pouring from the mouth of Harry as he unsuccessfully tried to impress them, getting more inebriated by the minute.

This was easily achieved thanks to a ceaseless stream of drinks supplied by the efficient waiter (Fletcher Illingworth)

"Between Mouthfuls" took place in a restaurant as two couples arrived for an evening meal.

Mr and Mrs Pearce (Barry Phillips and Pat Bowker) were at loggerheads as the haughty Mrs Pearce demanded to know details about her husband's three week "business trip" to Italy, and he giving evasive answers.

Martin (Tim Martin), an employee of Mr Pearce, and his wife Polly (Milly Wardle) are having an equally fraught discussion about her three week holiday, which turned out to be... in Italy!

Conversations were interspersed by the ministrations of a very confused waiter (Bob Cleeve) who had his work cut out in keeping both couples happy.

The precision timing of the fading in and out of dialogue between the tables and the service action from the waiter were impeccable and each character very well portrayed.

"Gosforth's Fete" told of the disaster which was the rained-out festivities, when Councillor Mrs Pearce (Stel-

la Barnes) arrived to open the fete. The band had not turned up, the Cub Scouts demolished the scaffolding, the tap of the tea urn was stuck on the "open" position and Milly (Kelly Steed) inadvertently broadcast that she was pregnant by Gosforth (Richard Hubbard) over the temperamental loudspeaker system.

The delightful vicar (Jean Pells) added to the general confusion by popping in and out and Stewart (Trevor Lord), Milly's fiancé, the Cub Scout leader, had the audience in stitches, drowning his sorrows as he tried to come to terms with Milly's betrayal.

Each player made the most of their part with hilarious results.

"A Talk In The Park" revealed the loneliness and failures of five different characters, Arthur (Bob Cleeve), Beryl (Kelly Steed), Charles (Barry Phillips), Doreen (Glenys Purchase) and Ernest (Robert Crane).

Each had their own peculiar traits and troubles and each dealt with them in a unique way.

However, in their loneliness, none was prepared to listen to or take interest in another's dilemma, thereby highlighting their continued isolation.

Each character was convincingly portrayed which left a poignant feeling at the end of an excellent programme.

Helen Coles