

Downham does 'The Winslow Boy'

Having been put on hold by covid and refurbishment issues for a couple of years, the players of Downham Stage Two temporarily transferred themselves to Hurst Green Village Hall to tackle Terrance Rattigan's play *The Winslow Boy*. It was a brave move because the Hall had not previously staged a dramatic production and was not equipped with suitable lighting, sound or set building facilities. The capable team of Downham technicians and set builders, however, managed to produce a workmanlike setting that enabled the players to offer an entertaining version of what is a very challenging play.

On the whole, the cast managed to portray their characters convincingly. Kim Croyden as the head of the household and Grace Herron as his wife gave strong performances as a family set on proving the innocence of a son accused of something of which he was not guilty, and the *Winslow Boy* himself, played admirably by newcomer Joseph Oakes, certainly made people side with him from the outset.

The play requires the audience to absorb a lot of dialogue and at times the legal and political jargon was quite bamboozling and occasionally the cast themselves seemed unsure of what they supposed to put across. But Chris Bowers, masterfully playing the lawyer Sir Robert Morton, left no one in any doubt that he was going to see to it that Right was done. The scene where the lawyer grills the boy before accepting the brief was one of the play's highlights.

As a sideshow we were invited to follow the love interests of the supposedly feminist daughter of the house, played by Jenny Spurrett, gorgeously attired in period costumes, as she firstly explored the intentions of her affianced, played well by Kenny Entwistle, and secondly how she dallied with an ardent, previously rejected no-hoper, exuberantly played by Alan Herron, whose comedic portrayal of his character, aroused the audience almost to the point of audience participation. Another fairly new member of Stage Two, Lucas Bowers, gave a very convincing portrayal of a feckless, ragtime driven student which should ensure him many future roles. His clip-on braces, however, not readily available in the early years of the twentieth century, were an oversight.

Other parts were played with humour, notably Violet the maid, played by Geralyn Lambert, whose appearance always induced a smile and Diane Rimmer's portrayal of a scatterbrained reporter managed to convince the audience that the curtains were more important than the interview.

A huge round of applause should be heard for the director, Jacqui Shepherd, who succeeded in providing a memorable evening's entertainment. Something that, on a dismal, sleety evening, was well worth turning out for.

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