

THE ODD COUPLE

by NEIL SIMON

DIRECTED by Wendy Boothroyd

PERFORMED by Bampton Players

VENUE: Riverside Hall, Bampton

6th JUNE 2019

Having a wealth of talent amongst their lady membership the presentation of the female version of Neil Simon's timeless comedy *The Odd Couple* for their summer production proved an excellent choice for the Bampton Players. This perceptive and witty script, packed with "one liners", exposes the strengths and weaknesses of relationships, testing the bonds of friendship when two very different personalities find themselves sharing the same living space! Olive regularly invites her girlfriends over to her New York apartment for an evening of "Trivial Pursuit", and they all become concerned when Florence doesn't show-up, especially after her husband telephones to say that she may be suicidal. Florence arrives eventually but is distraught disclosing to the others that her husband wants a divorce – though why she would want to stay married to a guy described as 5' 3", wearing an oversize toupee and a penchant for cowboy boots is a mystery! When the easy going and self-confessed slob Olive invites the tidy and obsessive Florence, whose mantra is "cooking, crying & cleaning", to stay in her disorganised apartment disaster is bound to follow! In an attempt to bring some light relief to the proceedings Olive asks her Spanish neighbours Manolo and Jesus down for dinner, but all ends in tears and Florence gets her marching orders! The audience was welcomed to an open stage depicting Olive's very messy apartment with French doors upstage and an effective New York skyline behind. The director made good use of the space available and the initial central positioning of the table as they gathered for the game, and the characters were established, gave a good focal point for the action. This was generally a well-cast and sensitively directed production and the accents were sustained without becoming grating. The individual characters of the four girlfriends were played to good effect, each sharing their worries and personal challenges and giving support to one another, the NY Lady Cop was particularly believable. On occasion the ages did not quite "sit-well" with the odd line, and the temptation to change some references probably had been hard to resist! The two Spanish brothers were well portrayed but not over the top, and the conversation between the two couples when most was lost in translation was hilarious! The roles of the two leads were in the hands of two seasoned performers, with Olive giving a strong gravitas and very natural slant to her performance, counter-balanced by a very fussy, fidgety and irritating Florence. The props, costumes and furniture were all suitably chosen, and the set well-designed for the era, although perhaps a "door slam" off SR would have given that extra feel to the comings and goings from the apartment, the use of "Domestic Solutions NY" for the scene changes was a clever touch! At times the pace was a bit tentative and "out front" with a lack of eye contact during conversation, but this could have been down to first night "bedding in" for what was a very enjoyable and warmly received production. The status quo hopefully was restored at the end with Florence upstairs with the "boys" and the "girls" back over for their usual game, but would things ever be the same again? Well yes of course according to their closing song *Big Girls Don't Cry* do they?

'Tricia Barclay

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Disclaimer

The N.O.D.A. Representative's intention is to give an objective critique of the overall production and in particular the performance viewed. It should be remembered that any review of this nature can only be objective as far as the techniques used during the performance observed. Any criticisms expressed may not have been valid at other performances, and are only made to encourage higher standards in Amateur Theatre.

It is hoped that the audience's appreciation of your efforts will have given everyone a lift and encouraged you to greater achievements in the future and that the observations made by the reviewer will prove helpful in improving future productions.