

## **Review of It Runs in the Family by Alex Wood in Sardines Magazine**

It Runs in the Family

Ray Cooney

society/company: Banbury Cross Players (directory)

performance date: 03 Feb 2016

venue: The Mill Arts Centre, Spiceball Pk Road, Banbury, OX16 5QE

reviewer/s: Alex Wood (Independent review)

Written by the multitalented and prolific king of farce Ray Cooney, this show was first produced in 1992. I was a bit surprised that, bearing its age and genre in mind, to its great credit the play has passed the test of time.

The action revolves around the affected and ruthlessly ambitious Dr Mortimore, whose preparations for giving The Ponsonby lecture (which could lead to promotion and a knighthood if he impresses) are interrupted by an old flame, a nurse he had an affair with 18 years previously, and the news that she had a son, who happens to be intoxicated and rather desperate, in the hospital and looking for dad, who he knows is a doctor....

In the way of farce various subterfuges, deceptions and confusions ensue. People sidle along windowsills, cross-dress and bloomers are pulled down.

Philip Fine was Dr Mortimore - somewhat manic, domineering and totally single-minded - it's a demanding role and Philip acquitted himself with credit. David Smith played the mild-mannered and put-upon Dr Hubert Bonney rather in the style of Jim Broadbent, which I thought was just right. Hilary Beaton, as Jane Tate, coped well with the variety of emotions she needed to express as the mother of long-lost son, Leslie, played by Isaac Stuart in a suitably delinquent manner.

Fraser McMinn popped in and out to great effect as Dr Connolly and John McCormick (Sir Willoughby Drake) showed what would happen if Sir Les Patterson was chair of St Andrew's Hospital. I enjoyed Jem Turner's performance as the elderly delinquent, Bill, who adds another layer of comic anarchy to the situation.

Helena Boughton suffered various indignities - including the aforementioned bloomer incident - in her very nice portrayal of the Matron and Zoe Pickworth (Sister) and Ann Westcott (mother) provided admirable support.

Dave Robinson worked very hard at the role of the Police Sergeant though I wonder if he might have made more impact with a rather slower, measured approach to show his frustration with a case that has run out of his control.

Along those lines, whilst the 'set up' of the first act was performed in a nicely controlled way I thought the second act was just a bit too frantic for its own good. To me it had a 'juddery' feel about it, with lots of funny lines lost to the air in a desire to push the whole thing along a bit too fast.

That said there was lots of fun to be had in this well-received show.