

Plaza Suite – Neil Simon.

Rotherfield Players – Friday 13 May 2016

These three playlets have been done in different ways, including all six key roles played by the same actors, and three different directors dealing with each set – thankfully the Players chose the sensible one director/different actors route.

The trilogy starts with **Visitor from Mamaroneck** where Denise Clark quickly sets the scene neatly depicting Karen Nash as an anxious, and perhaps slightly bored housewife, trying to revive her husband's interest in marriage – and in her as an attractive woman in particular. Alan Varley's direction highlighted the lighter notes of this script (the right choice for this audience) as opposed to some of the more brittle, darker aspects and soon had the audience laughing at the action and dialogue. As the grumpy ursine work obsessed husband, Adam Hardy erupts into the set oblivious of his wife's agenda – and does not take much persuading to have an after hour's conference with his voluptuous young secretary Jean, played with some nicely guilty touches by Eleanor Welch.

There is a lot of cleverly timed and directed action going on in this set, with some good support play by David Close as the waiter and Bellhop Dan Shaw – a young man with a lot more stage presence than years under his belt.

Not the most popular set with the audience afterwards, to us Karen's last comment, both wistful and pregnant with possibility, was the best delivered line of the evening.

Moving on to **Visitor from Hollywood**, the second set, Neil Simon draws an elegant picture of the seductive essence of fame. Brian Wright as Jesse Kiplinger is a bloke on his own in a hotel room – 'nuff said about motivation for what comes next. Having abandoned old flame Muriel for the bright lights of Hollywood Brian expertly depicts Jesse as determined to milk any fleeting contact he may have had with any star to loosen both Muriel's restraint – and anything else that comes to hand. Louise does a brilliant job of showing that Muriel's appearance in the Plaza Suite has as many potential outcomes as the Nile delta. Audience reaction throughout Rotherfield (well from Hall to Kings Arms anyway) had this as the best of the sets and wished it could have been a little longer.....

Key to the whole thing of course is the elegant and robust set, well designed and executed. Everything looked and worked as it should, which is a great complement to the backstage crew.

As a finale, **Visitor from Forest Hills** was directed with energy and pace giving James Gallifant as Roy Hubley all the chaotic slapstick range any actor could want – we did feel sorry for that bathroom door! Even though the writer telegraphed the denouement half way through it was a thoroughly well done and entertaining piece with Rachael Martin shining as the frantically long suffering wife. Great little cameos from Andrew Halford as groom to be Borden, and Ali Close as the bride so anxious not to emulate her mother rounded off this enjoyable set,

Good to see the Players talent pool growing, another polished performance

Peter Thompson