

September Tide

Date

Thursday 27th June 2019

Company

The Tamaritans Theatre Company

Venue

The Drum Theatre, Theatre Royal Plymouth

Type of Production

Play

Director

Noel Preston-Jones

Musical Director

n/a

Choreographer

n/a

Report

Daphne du Maurier's play 'September Tide' is a challenging piece in many ways. It tells of the complex interaction of a family's relationships – particularly between the mother, daughter and son-in-law. Such a triangular love story is destined for sadness, of course, but the inevitability of the result is reached through some moving and dramatic scenes.

As always, the set was authentic for the purpose here with appropriate doors and furniture, which is no mean achievement on such a smaller stage. The blocking was carefully worked out and the best use was made of the space available.

The actors were well cast overall and their characters' interactions beautifully illustrated. Matthew Becker as the son-in-law, Evan, had a haunting, distant look about him which was quite eerie at times but established the character to be what he was. Katy Gamble, as Cherry, the rather naïve wife and seemingly innocent party, gave a measured performance with quiet confidence throughout. Stella, the love-struck mother-in-law, played by the excellent Rebekah Woodley, showed a range of emotions sensitively, displaying reluctance one moment and willing submission the next. She oozed elegance, class and true panache, really commanding the stage as soon as she entered. Mrs Tucket, the housekeeper played by Doreen Sutton, gave a convincing performance with a convincing Cornish accent, although at times I had difficulty

catching her dialogue and a couple of ‘stage whispers’ left me wondering.

Freddy Denman, as Robert Hanson, the long-suffering companion of Stella, portrayed an air of sophistication mixed with befuddlement and his dialogue, particularly in the first scene, was beautifully delivered. Connor Dalby as the injured son, Jimmy, had wonderful diction and delivery, although the accent felt a little too affected at times.

I think the problem with this play is that it is very slow paced, building to a tense climax at the end of act one, which we then hope will develop into more of a drama in the second act, but in fact not much more happens! Perhaps by modern standards it is just too gently paced – however, du Maurier’s dialogue was beautifully crafted and the atmosphere of the piece certainly transported us to the very different world of 1940s Cornwall. I would have loved the final moments to be slightly more lingering, leaving the audience with an air of hope rather than vague finality. What does happen? Will Evan and Cherry ever truly be happy, even in New York? Will Stella settle for Robert? Does Jimmy’s leg mend and does Mrs Tucket ever retire?!

The costumes, lighting and sound were all complimentary to the piece and combined to make this a traditional production from director Noel Preston-Jones. It was great to see a large audience for the performance I attended, and I was pleased to hear houses had been encouraging throughout the run. Having said that, it would be great to see the Tamaritans, such a strong acting company, bring more current, popular and dramatic repertoire, demanding bigger casts, to a venue such as The Drum in future as there is such a depth of talent within the company.

Gareth Davies

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