

I Ought To Be In Pictures -14th July – The Mill at Sonning

When an ageing Hollywood scriptwriter, with writers-block and a part-time girlfriend, receives an unexpected visit from his sassy nineteen old daughter, sixteen years after he left her and her mother and brother, you know you're in for a bumpy ride on an emotional rollercoaster. Add to the mix the writing of the legendary Neil Simon and you can expect a few laughs along the way too.

Directed by Anthony Valentine, this excellent three-handed comedy drama starred a trio of very talented actors. Terence Booth as the writer, Herb Tucker, Eleanor Tomlinson as the daughter, Libby and Justine Glenton as Steffy, the girlfriend, all gave tremendous performances that tickled the funny bone and tugged at the heartstrings.

Awash with typically terrific and laugh out loud Neil Simon dialogue, this play showing a wayward father coming to terms with his past, his responsibilities and commitments was a pleasure to watch and enjoy.

The Cheeky Chappie – Dave Sealey – 19th May – Norden Farm

Dave Sealey's one-man show about the comedian Max Miller was an enjoyable insight into the man known as The Cheeky Chappie.

This gentle presentation began with a look at Max's life from his days as a humble street urchin in Brighton to becoming Britain's highest paid comedian of the time.

Interspersed with snippets from Miller's then considered risqué act and comic material from the likes of Jimmy James and Robb Wilton, this was a fun, if not slightly rushed look back at a time when 'Variety' was king.

After the interval Sealey, resplendent in Miller's trademark garish suit, white hat and spats, recreated one of Max's routines, complete with the infamous 'White' and 'Blue' books, saucy and sentimental songs and catchphrases.

Sealey knows his subject well and I found the glimpses of Miller's home life as fascinating as the routines were funny.

As Max would say, "There'll never be another!"

MAIDENHEAD DRAMA FESTIVAL – 30th April – Norden Farm

The penultimate evening of the festival began with a popular festival play, *Cagebirds* by David Campton. Performed by The Young Theatre at Beaconsfield, this complex piece about obsession, self-imposed isolation and upsetting the status quo, had a work-in-progress feel about it. The characters, or 'birds' were well-defined and the 'prison' setting was a nice touch.

Next was Maidenheads Players with 'Pandora' written by MP member Lorraine Forrest-Turner. Based on the 'Pandora's Box' myth and set in an engineering company in the mid-seventies, when PC meant a policemen, this was a clever production with some good performances, that after a shaky start really got into the swing of things. Andy Barrett's comic portrayal of Eric the Operations Manager was a particular highlight.

And finally, in my mind, saving the best for last, was Henley Players absolutely terrific black comedy 'For Thine Is The Kingdom'. I can't praise this play enough. The writing, the acting and the overall production of this piece, based around the surreal interrogation of a young woman in a totalitarian Britain of the not too distant future, was superb. Alexander Rogers who wrote the piece and played the chief interrogator is a talent to look out for. Brilliant!