



Drowning on Dry Land

Written by: Alan Ayckbourn

Directed by: Mark Stannett

Performed: Wednesday 23rd - Saturday 26th April 2008 at 7.45pm in [St Anne's Hall](#).

	Cast	Crew
	<p>Charlie Conrad Linzi Ellison Jason Ratcliffe Hugo de Prescourt QC Gale Gilchrist Marsha Bates Simeon Diggs</p>	<p>Richard Frampton Sue Jakobsen Peter Nower Paul Johnson Rachel O'Reilly Orna Joseph Jake Flint</p> <p>Producer..... Set Construction..... Set Design..... Prompt..... Lighting Operator..... Sound Operator.....</p> <p>Lesley Tulley Paul Checkley Sara Curnock Cook Fiona Makujina Becca "Yorkie" Duke Eamonn O'Reilly</p>

NODA Review by John Huckle

The stage was open showing a lovely garden set dominated by a beautifully painted central tower. It was a scene that could lull an unsuspecting audience into thinking that they were going to be seeing a happy play. A more experienced audience would know that when they attend an Alan Ayckbourn play they are going to see a clever mix of humour and Ayckbourn's particularly predictable style of nihilism.

Ayckbourn is one of the country's most prolific (this is his 66th play) and successful playwrights. This play is a typical Ayckbourn exposé of the human condition taken to extremis. The central theme is the unthinking celebration of contemporary celebrities even if their status has been derived from failure. Ayckbourn has said that he was inspired by an incident captured in Piers Morgan's 2003 television documentary *The Importance of Being Famous*, in which a young girl jumped up and down in a field asking: "Am I famous yet?"

The play has Ayckbourn's usual quick fire dialogue and fascinating storyline of the fall of the central celebrity Charlie Conrad. Charlie was indeed a loveable loser famous only for his lack of success. The part was more than competently played by Richard Frampton. Richards's good looks and casual ease on the stage provided an interesting backdrop to the dramatic irony given to the audience of his nature as a sexual predator.

The most calamitous of Charlie's attempts at sex was, albeit hugely encouraged, with an entertainer hired for Charlie's children's party Marsha Bates / Mr Chortles. Orna Joseph played the complex character of Marsha Bates with her alter ego Mr Chortles. Orna looked great, her costumes and make up were both spot on. She almost stole the show with her sharp well paced delivery of dialogue and real stage presence. Orna gave a well observed portrayal of the introverted Marsha and the eccentricity of the mute clown Mr Chortles. It was very dramatic when Orna broke down while proclaiming her womanhood.

Charlie's attractive trophy wife was Linzi Ellison an ex TV presenter and minor celebrity. The part was played by Susan Jakobsen who was cute and assured. She had plenty of convincing characterisation. Her costume and hair were entirely appropriate. Just to make the plot more interesting Ayckbourn included the attendance of an investigative reporter who just happened to be on hand to witness the Charlie / Marsha debacle. Rachel O'Reilly played Gale Gilchrist with sophistication and total credibility. I liked Rachel's contrasting portrayal of Gail pre and post her nemesis.

The central characters were supported by good performances from all the other performers

Jason Ratcliffe was portrayed as the tough manager with the common touch by Peter Nower.

Paul Johnson played the slightly bumbling and unconvincing alleged super star lawyer Hugo de Prescourt.

Although quite a minor role Jake Flint provided first class support as Marsha's supposedly less than able solicitor.

I liked the set, particularly the folly of a tower which came to represent the futility and the zero sum game of celebrity life as various members of the cast attempted to reach the top. It was only the very last moment of the play when Charlie finally reached the top. The performers made good use of the acting space. The sound canvas and the lighting were both very good. I have already mentioned costume and hair where a lot of effort had clearly been made.

Your director Mark Stannett did an excellent job; he ensured that the story was convincingly conveyed and that the audience had a good evening's entertainment. I thought that the programme was an excellent reflection of the play's central celebrity theme. Its layout and content perfectly matched the show. The Front of House team were attentive and well presented as was the excellent catering team.

Thank you and congratulations to every one in the Club.

Production Photos (Click to enlarge)

[Back Home](#)