



## Kindly Leave the Stage

**Written by:** John Chapman

**Directed by:** Eamonn O'Reilly

**Performed:** April 2007

Wednesday 25th - Friday 27th @ 7.30pm, Saturday 28th @ 2.30pm & 7.00pm at St Anne's Hall



Cast		Crew	
<b>Rupert</b> .....	Richard Brent	<b>Producer</b> .....	Lesley Tulley
<b>Charles</b> .....	Mark Stannett	<b>Stage Manger</b> .....	Judith Butler
<b>Madge</b> .....	Rebecca Roseman	<b>Lighting &amp; Sound Operation</b> .....	Tracey Childs
<b>Sarah</b> .....	Emma Stallard	<b>Lighting &amp; Sound Design.</b>	Richard Frampton
<b>Mrs Cullen</b> .....	Frances Allen	<b>Set Construction</b> .....	Paul Checkley
<b>Edward</b> .....	Paul Johnson	<b>Catering Manager</b> .....	Anna Gilbert
<b>Angela</b> .....	Siân Ashworth	<b>FoH Manager</b> .....	Rachel O'Reilly
<b>Miss Brown (The Nurse)</b> .....	Orna Joseph		

## Synopsis

The marriage of Rupert and Sarah is on the rocks and their friends Charles and Madge, both of whom are lawyers, agree to handle the divorce. After the curtain has been up a few minutes, Rupert forgets his lines, has a brain storm and threatens to kill Charles in full view of the audience because he's been having an affair off stage, with Rupert's real wife, Madge. Quite true as it happens. The rest of the cast try to ignore the incident and forge ahead with the original play but Rupert picks up a knife and advances on Charles, who is forced to take cover in a large cabin trunk which is on the set at the time. A real life marital comedy now evolves. The situation is further complicated when the actor playing the old father, Edward, makes his entrance. He is an ageing Shakespearean star, once famous for his King Lear but now an alcoholic on the skids. He happens to have asked his new agent to the performance that night. Edward is blissfully unaware that the play has switched from art to life. Out of loyalty to a fellow actor, the rest of the cast do their best to accommodate the poor chap, but he gradually begins to crack up, especially as some of his cues are coming from a cabin trunk. The play is a light hearted tilt at the complete theatricality of stage folk.

## Reviews

**NODA Review by John Huckle**

## SUMMARY

A deceptive opening gave way to a play within a play and an opportunity for the Club to demonstrate its high production standards. The actors engaged the audience delivering an entertaining story with a clever twist. The production maintained pace, humour and credibility, from a drama that could in many ways have been presented as a one act play. A very enjoyable evening.

## REPORT

The play opened on a seemingly conventional staged dinner party between two couples who had clearly known each other for some time. The set, a traditional box set was beautifully dressed in a way that gave the opening a sense of a family drama with a hint of Priestly or Aykbourne.

The plot developed between the two couples, Madge [ Rebecca Roseman] and her husband Charles [ Mark Stannett] who were the guests of Sarah [ Emma Stallard] and Rupert [Richard Brent] . There was a sense of an uncluttered domesticity almost dullness. It soon became apparent that Sarah and Rupert had decided to divorce. The interesting twist to the opening plot was that Charles and Madge were solicitors and that they would be representing Sarah and Rupert respectively. So far so good, not a play that was going to set the world on fire but one that might be mildly entertaining.

With the arrival of Sarah's mother [ Frances Allen] at about half way through the first act the actors started missing their lines, needing prompts and falling into the nightmare situation that every actor fears - the dialogue loop that you cannot escape.

It was at this point that the audience couldn't quite work out what was happening and started look around for some sort of explanation. The explanation was that the play was a very cleverly written play within a play.

The actors playing the parts of Rupert and Madge were supposedly in real life married to each other and Madge was having a serious affair with Charles. This in turn had caused Rupert to abandon the script and attempt to kill Charles.

As soon as the audience understood the what was going on they were able to focus on a much more interesting piece of drama as Rupert waged war on Charles and was kept in check by the rest of the ensemble who half heartedly tried to stay in role in their opening personas.

I really enjoyed the entrance of Paul Johnson as Mr Cullen, Sarah's father. Paul succeeded in making the old roué swamp the younger players as they attempted to carry on with the original play as if nothing had happened.

The play became a vehicle for revealing the backgrounds of the actors including Rupert's affair with Sarah and that Mr Cullen's career had been less than the crowning glory he had hope for. Ultimately the play reached a stalemate with Rupert having to accept the break down of his marriage and Mr Cullen that he had reached the nadir of his professional career reflecting the sense of impending chaos as the final curtain came down.

The actors all gave excellent portrayals of their characters both in their slightly dull stage roles and as the much more animated actors of the repertory company. There was a positive change in the delivery of their dialogue and physicality.

Rebecca Roseman changed from the dutiful wife into a woman in love which reflected exactly what had happened in her marriage.

Mark Stannett was convincing as the typical hard working solicitor who really doesn't want to be bothered with having to deal with work related problems at home particularly when it isn't quite his field of law. As the skilled actor he played the skilled actor even more convincingly demonstrating to Rupert in a quiet perhaps almost hesitant way that he was quite the better actor and better companion for Madge.

Emma Stallard looked lovely and was convincing as the lover that Rupert had taken, if not on the rebound then perhaps casually. It was clear that she cared significantly more for him than he cared for her.

Richard Brent played his character in a manic crazed fashion that in retrospect had been obvious from the opening of the play. He showed how good he had been at maintaining this characterisation when he was challenged by Charles to do some 'proper' acting.

Frances Allen was excellent as both the slightly over bearing mother and the solid supporter of real acting talent seen from the perspective of an established theatrical career. In many ways she provided a good grounding for both plays.

Paul Johnson was simply excellent as Mr Cullen as he was jolted by various incursions of the new reality of the play. I particularly liked the way he reacted to drinking what he had thought to have been cold tea when it was supposedly real whisky. I also loved the way that he suddenly launched into his famous King Lear moment with real conviction and gusto. The Lear speech had been well chosen by the playwright to represent the madness and disappointment of old men

The stage manager [Siân Ashworth] provided a convincing portrayal of those hard working folk forever having to rescue something somewhere usually with gaffer tape. I particularly liked the duty first aid officer [Orna Joseph] whose dogged longsuffering determination so closely reflected the real life counterpart. Both parts added to the credibility of the play.

The technical aspects of the play: the costumes, the lighting, props and stage management also gave good support to the play.

The play was directed with attention to detail, the actors all conveyed their characters with conviction and pace. The story was interesting and genuinely funny. The whole company did extremely well to maintain the story line which, I think, could easily have been presented as a one act play.

Whilst I could see the intention of the programme in presenting the original play I thought that it could have added to the audience's appreciation by giving a little more detail such as the names of the various actors. I always think that a programme can also be used to promote the club and its work.

The Front of House team including the excellent Catering Corps were great at creating a welcoming atmosphere for us and the whole audience.

Once again thank you for an enjoyable evening.

## **Production Photos** (Click to enlarge)



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