



Be inspired by amateur theatre

Society : Mortimer Dramatic Society  
Production : Up Pompeii  
Date : Friday January 27<sup>th</sup> 2017  
Venue : St John's Hall - Mortimer  
Report by : Jeanette Maskell

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## Show Report

I was delighted to be invited to review Mortimer's latest offering "Up Pompeii" I had watched the TV series and seen the film but this was a first for me as a stage production. This society always puts on a first rate show and they excel at comedy; this was no exception!

It had been extremely well cast and there were some superb performances which were splendidly maintained throughout this saucy romp.

Having been shown to my table by a friendly efficient - **Jackie Bowyer** from front of house we tucked into some delicious olives and bread with dipping oil. This was followed by an absolutely scrumptiously tasty lasagne made by – **Jean Chapman** and **Suzanne Kimber** who are to be congratulated on catering for such a large number, in a compact area. To round off the meal during the interval we were served with an erupting tiramvesuvius complete with sparklers. Thank you ladies for a splendid spread!

**Darren Reed** - (Lurcio) – What a mammoth role this was; on stage from start to finish with an inordinate amount of dialogue! I am sure everyone has seen Frankie Howerd in this role; however Darren was every bit as memorable as Howerd. His comic timing was perfection; not rushing his delivery allowing the audience to savour each and every innuendo and share in every comic moment. Interaction with the audience was quite brilliant and they really enjoyed his banter with them. His facial expressions were dynamic and expressive as was his body language and movement. He never let his character slip even when on the peripheral of the action and with all credit to him he kept going even when he put his wig on back to front. This truly was a standout charismatic performance.

**Mari Fleming** – (Ammonia) – As the mistress of the house this young lady was excellent. She brought a great sense of fun to her forceful characterisation and her dialogue was strong and animated as was her visuals and movement. She had a great rapport with the rest of the cast especially her philandering husband Ludicrus. I really enjoyed the transformation from the staid overbearing wife to the sexy adulteress which she achieved quite effortlessly; changing the tone of her voice and making her moves skittish and sassy.

**Tom Shorrock** – (Ludicrus Sextus) – This was a masterful performance by a skilfully competent actor. Dialogue was expertly delivered sometimes confident sometimes suitably flustered but always energetic and well intonated. His scene with Suspenda at the end of act 1 was superb and I so admired his bravery in showing his buttocks as the curtain closed.

**Nigel Antell** – (Corneous) – I was particularly enamoured with this young man; he played his part completely straight which brought out the humour fully. His expressive dialogue was

delivered with great diction and projection. His movement was natural and easy and he looked well in his tunic. His interaction with Lurcio was superb and I enjoyed all their scenes in which sparks and banter flew.

**Cathy Ramsell** – (Erotica) – Although this was only a small character; this young woman managed to capture all the qualities of a typical teenager. Her interjections were extremely well timed and said with such innocence that it brought out the humour famously. I loved the furtive looks and winsome smiles she gave Corneous which enhanced the development of their relationship.

**Ian Vernon-Wilson** – (Nausius) – There was more than a touch of the “Frank Spencer” about this young mans’ performance which really worked for the character. Although I would have liked a little more projection his dialogue was lively and spirited. His movement was suitably twitchy and his vivid pained facial expressions were quite hilarious.

**Sarah Roper** – (Voluptua) – As the runaway slave this young woman’s first entrance was aptly nervous which quickly developed into a suggestive temptress as she told Ludicrus she would do “anything” if he would hide her from Treacherus. The diversity of character she achieved was most commendable. Dialogue was clear with great inflection and movement was natural and fluid.

**Terri Chopping** – (Suspenda) – This was an exceptionally arrant performance; cheeky brash and brassy. Dialogue was vivaciously energetic, movement bold and sassy and visuals dynamically animated. I absolutely loved her contagious laughter. The scenes between her and Ludicrus were ridiculously farcical and an absolute treat to watch.

**James Burton Stewart** – (Captain Treacherus) – I thoroughly enjoyed this wickedly humorous performance. His bearing was robust and athletic complementing his dominant moves. His dialogue was determined and tenacious with just a hint of irony. His face lit up when listening to “Ammonia” and his whole persona changed.

**Michael Kimber** – (Kretinus) – As Captain Treacherus’ sidekick he looked and sounded every bit the dumb fool. His movement was loose and languid as befitted the character and he had a wonderfully vacant expression. Although he had little dialogue what he did have was delivered slowly and deliberately exactly what was required to complete the dim-witted characterisation.

**Mary Auckland** – (Senna the Soothsayer) – Oh wow, wow and thrice wow! What a fabulous performance this was! She was the perfect crone delivering her dialogue in a quirky manner that would’ve graced any Shakespearean play. I liked the way she came in from the back of the auditorium singling out members of the audience predicting calamity and catastrophe.

**Phil Collins/Paula Stenson** – (Directors) – What an absolute dream team this was; it was clear they worked fantastically well together. The overall production had great pace and formidable action. Timing of doors opening and characters entrances was extraordinarily slick a real credit to them and the cast. Spacing and positioning was first rate with no upstaging and no actor being hampered or impeded. It was clear they had worked on characterisations with attention to delivery of dialogue and diction therein. I was fortunate to have the

opportunity to speak with them and they told me how proud they were of their cast and rightly so. However without their vision and inspiration this would not have been the brilliant piece of theatre it was. It was an insanely crazy farce and they should be extremely proud of their achievement.

**Phil Ramsell** – (Stage Manager) – Other than ensuring the cast were able to make the entrances without any cause for concern; there was not an awful lot for this SM to do. However it is imperative to have a professional on hand should anything untoward happen.

**John Bull/Phil Ramsell/Members of the Society** – (Set Design & Construction) – with painting by **Nick Pounder** – I really liked this set; it had a caricature feel about it which I think had a great deal to do with the colour it had been painted, with its chipped and slightly dilapidated walls. I liked the central well which really added to the effect of the courtyard. The practical barn doors were excellent as was the bathroom door and the Italian shutters on the windows (all of which had been expertly constructed) were superb.

**Suzanne Kimber/Judy Winter/Netty O'Brien** – (Wardrobe/Costumes) – The men's togas and tunics were perfect for the characters and I especially liked Treacherus' tunic. The ladies diaphanous frocks looked super with just enough of a splash of colour to lift their faces. I wasn't sure whether Ammonia's final costume was too modern or whether the directors had wanted this in order to make a statement. I would also have liked a little more consistency in the shoe department; however I know how difficult it is to find a sandal that looks authentic.

**Shirley Shorrocks** – (Props) – Personal props were all ideal though maybe the two potion bottles could have been slightly bigger. Did the props team make the barrow? If so you have my congratulations it was brilliant!

**Katja Hunt** – (Lighting) – This was a good plot which was well controlled and cued. Spotting was first class and general lighting flooded the stage with a fresh bright glow. The red hues that flashed around as Vesuvius prepared to erupt were really effective.

**John Makeham** – (Sound) – What a shame there was no equipment that could have been utilised to mic the actors off stage dialogue. It was the only time I struggled to hear. I was impressed with the balance as sound effects were audible but not intrusive. The co-ordination achieved between him and lighting for Mount Vesuvius was absolutely spot on and highly commendable.

Thank you

**Jet**

Jeanette Maskell - NODA Representative - London Region - Area 13