



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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Supporting live theatre in South Australia

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SEASON'S GREETINGS

Galleon Theatre Group

Domain Theatre

Until 11 November

Review by Janice Bailey

Christmas is time for a big family gathering, including extended family not seen all that often and usually one or two 'strays' who are welcomed into the fold. There is lots of food and drinking and the opportunity for the outspoken to have their say, regardless of who is listening.

Belinda and Neville are the hosts. Mari Nield plays Belinda with understanding and an excellent sense of comedy, constantly frustrated by the hapless Neville, who is constantly disappearing to 'fix' something. Scott Battersby captures the character well. Enter the guests – Uncle Harvey, a retired security guard, played brilliantly by Lindsay Dunn. His portrayal of the character captures the pathos as well as the comedy.

There is Rachel, Belinda's unmarried sister, who has invited Clive, a writer, to join the frivolity. Maxine Grubel plays Rachel sympathetically and with the required understatement while Simon Lancione reveals excellent comic timing in the chaos of the finale.

Adrian Hennes plays Neville's friend Eddie with understanding, finding an escape from the general chaos and his pregnant wife, Pattie, by joining Neville in fixing objects in an attempt to avoid Pattie.

Charlotte Batty as the nagging Pattie delivers another commanding performance in this role. Joanne St Clair as Phyllis, Neville's sister, has a difficult role as her character is not pivotal to the plot. However, she has created a believable and empathic character as Bernard's wife. Bernard is a doctor whose annual puppet shows for the children – whom we never actually meet – have to be attended by all. There is the traditional 'preview' which the adults have to 'suffer' and assist with. Brian Godfrey is wonderful as Bernard and the 'puppet show' is one of the funniest pieces of theatre I have seen.

This leads to Kym Clayton's superb direction. With the diversity of characters and the chaos of action, including the final scene, there is so much opportunity for uncontrolled disaster with the actors having a lot of fun while leaving the audience trying to work it all out. Alan Ayckbourne has supplied some wonderful characters involved in somewhat unbelievable situations which have been brought to life by talented actors and an excellent director. Do not miss the opportunity to see this one.

**Brian Godfrey is a member of the ATG team.*