

ROTHERFIELD PLAYERS
“LES LIAISONS DANGEREUSES”
FRIDAY 24TH OCTOBER 2008

Christopher Hampton's adaptation of Choceros de Laclos's original novel which demonstrates how massive wealth can prompt an ennui which leads to a path of carefully orchestrated casual cruelty- simply because nothing else in a life of abundance provides such an illicit thrill -sets a production challenge beyond most amateur companies, but one met head on and with total conviction by the Rotherfield Players.

Understated but tasteful and well constructed sets work well with this type of production, allowing the studied stillness of the actors' posture to amplify the impact of dialogue, where occasional flashes of humour breakthrough the thunderclouds of malice which dominate this play.

Cruising through the stagnant and muddy waters of pre-Revolutionary French high society, Becky Sym's crocodilian interpretation of the malicious Marquise de Merteuil brought to mind the unfathomable thoughts hinted at in the eye of a giant reptile seen a little too close for comfort. Totally convincing in portraying the evil Madames icy confidence in the powers of her sexuality and intellect, Becky gave a powerful focus to this production, as central as the sun to our solar system.

Simon Kerr Davis has a powerful resonant voice with a stage presence to match, as the predatory Vicomte de Valmonte he too was convincingly sanguine with the exercise of his seductive prowess, until to his surprise he falls in love with one of his targeted victims, destroying both of them in the process.

Circulating around these two planetary giants, the supporting players gave matching commitment and skilfully followed Kate Organ's clever and sensitive direction. Tremulous yet passionate, Rachel Shaw as Madame de Tourvel gave every prescient impression of a beautiful titian moth drawn to a fatal flame, demonstrating full awareness that any weakness would indeed prove terminal.

Its always good to see young actors developing in poise and confidence. Adam Hardy emerged from the crowd scenes to show that as the amoral factotum Azolan he can hold his space on the set with the most experienced actors, whilst the ingenue Cecile Volanges was played with all innocent poise by the delightful Rhonda West. With young leads-to-be like this in the wings the future of the players seems assured.

Put Alison Organ in a supporting role such as Madame de Rosemonde and you can be quietly sure she will tuck the scene under her arm and make off with it, such is her easy presence, whilst Kate Awcock continued to demonstrate her versatility and prowess as the naive mother of Cecile, seduction target number two in the sights of gunner Valmonte. Jon Alcock did well to represent the puerile puppy Dancenny so convincingly and Sarah Thorn's willing tart Emillie brought pretty and charming interludes to the main action.

Overall a powerful performance, at times chilling in the callousness of its deliberate cruelty and at others humorous in its mocking of the human condition, this was a production of virtually professional quality.

Peter Thompson

