

What's the Rumor?

Effie's Players delivers a slap-stick performance with Rumors

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The Wooster Voice — Arts & Entertainment

Have you ever attended an awkward dinner party you were invited to that turned into a night of high laughs and mystery? Put your “Clue” cards away; Neil Simon’s romp-fest comedy Rumors puts the game to shame. Effie’s Players, a student theatre organization at the College, delivered a comedic weekend for the campus in Shoolroy Theatre.

Directed by Yassi Davoodi ’11, the performance showcased not only a talented cast but an electric energy of entertainment and intrigue.

Set in the society of the New York elite, several wealthy couples gather at a dinner party to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Charlie Brock, the deputy major of the city, and his wife, Mariah. But they soon discover that the servants are missing, the hostess cannot be found and Charlie has shot himself through the earlobe. The guests then make every comedic attempt to cover up what has happened from the media and the police. Though we never see Charlie, his presence is felt as Ken Gorman (Kevin Glass ’14) constantly checks up on him.

It was refreshing to watch a play traditionally built for proscenium theatres like Freedlander in a space such as Shoolroy. The chaos of the story escalated as the characters try to make “smart” decisions with all the mental acuity of headless chickens. There was no need for any set changes as the living room, the bar, the lone table for the telephone and the stairs into the upper portion of the house were all carefully stamped in the space. The lighting did not consist of any elaborate changes to indicate a change in the plot or action; instead, enough was provided to create the illusion of a posh soirée.

However, the show suffered from some occasional sight-line issues where standing characters blocked performers on stage who might have been sitting down. There was one particular moment when you could not see the face of one character that entered for at least 15 minutes.

Though it would have been nice if the focus of the action had been explored just a little more at different corners, it was smart to retain some of the main plot driving points within the living room. Davoodi, though, did a phenomenal job of allowing the characters to move effortlessly in the theatre to fully display everyone’s comedic involvement in the sticky situation.

Without reservations, the funniest moments were composed by Glass when he portrayed the freaked-out Ken. His character grew more delightfully silly when he temporarily lost his earring after trying to handle Charlie’s gun. Glass was able to successfully translate his character’s actions into even more comedic moments by constantly mistranslating what others were trying to communicate to him. For example, when the door bell rang, his character exclaimed, “Is that a cat?”

The audience also responded well to the performance with roaring laughter. Katie Markovich's '12 portrayal of Chris was wisely based off the eccentric personality of the stuffy rich woman who seemed clueless but downright witty for the things she said. Similarly, Alex Dereix '14 delivered a charming and funny performance as Claire and had an impressive chemistry with her on stage husband, Lenny (Alex Parrott '13), who was equally able to generate multiple laughs out of the spectators.

I couldn't contain my laughter when the couple Cookie (Janna Haywood '14) and Ernie (Malcolm Campbell-Taylor '13) interacted with each other. Cookie resembled the homey demeanor of southern chef pioneer Paula Deen as she scrambled to sit and stand up with an injured back as her over-the-top husband tried relentlessly to assist her. It was a kick to watch Kyle Thomas '11 as the upcoming candidate, Glenn Cooper, for state senate fight with his ditzy, sexually enticing and promiscuous wife Cassie (Isabelle Briggs '12). You could clearly see which actor was destined to play each of these demanding roles.

Rumors presented a winning combination to the general fan fare of the audience: a simple set, an eye-popping and intriguing script and knee-slapping performances. When you mix these elements of a production together into the same room, you get a show that provides a rewarding experience for all in the theatre.