**Scene One Plus review**

Jade Morrell 8/6 /2024

Stepping into Scaplens Community Players’ world for the first time, you are embraced by the warm and immersive atmosphere that positively hums with anticipation. The play for the evening’s performance, *Unbroken Bonds, A Women’s War*, promised a poignant journey through the untold stories of a community during wartime – a theme as rich with historical significance as it is with emotional depth.

The intimate setting of the Black Cherry – which recently announced the sad news of its closure – allows the audience to feel a real connection to the actors. The setting was simple and effectively designed to transport the audience through the wartime narrative.

*Unbroken Bonds, A Women’s War* weaves together the experiences of a Dorset community following the announcement of World War 2, centred around a couple called Alice and Jack whose lives are thrown into turmoil by the impending war, performed superbly by Marie Bushell and Jay Knox. I particularly liked Jack’s letter exchange, where Jay honestly depicts his war experiences. The writing of Katy Nutt was sharp and evocative, balancing moments of wit, pensive thought and tentative warmth. The dialogue was authentic, allowing the characters’ personal war struggles to shine through. I enjoyed the scene where the soldiers have just been called up, and they are trying to learn drills from Sergeant Bennison (perfectly played by Peter Bennett) – it was very funny and all the gents in this scene had fabulous comedy timing.

Each actor brought authenticity to their role, making it easy to become invested in their journeys. I really liked Sam the Barman, played by Dave Clements, as he comforted his fraught punters with wise words and compassion. The unlikely duo of Harry and Dave (played by Sam Sheppard and Lindsay Jones) was balanced skilfully, especially as they watched D-Day unfold. In fact, everyone (and it’s a 19 strong cast) in some capacity had something to portray and they did this with conviction.

Not only did Scaplens offer some very well executed acting, they also had ‘storytellers’ who spoke various monologues. Credit to Christopher Polychronopulos, David Vinter, Veronica Ryder and Elle Newing for executing such large dialogues. I particularly enjoyed the unflawed harmonies from ‘The Scaplen’s Sisters’ Aurelia Baker, Annabel Jackson and Olivia Moss, a fitting tribute to the likes of the Andrews Sisters.

The creative directors Carole Allen and Robert Rankin should absolutely be commended. The pacing of the play ensured that the audience remained engaged throughout, with smooth transitions between scenes that maintained the flow of the story. The venue didn’t offer a particularly exciting lighting plot, but it really didn’t detract from what was happening onstage.

While this was my first experience with Scaplens Community Players, I thoroughly enjoyed it, and it is a testament to the power of community theatre to tell important stories with heart and integrity. It’s a production that not only entertains but also enlightens, reminding us of the often-overlooked contributions and sacrifices of those in times of conflict. Also, with D-DAY 80 merely days ago, Scaplens really timed the play right.

Congratulations to all the creative team and cast involved. I look forward to seeing when audiences will ‘Meet Again!’.