

THEATRE REVIEW

On a recent night out in Keighley I witnessed a man become purple with rage and violently smash a bottle over a woman's head killing her instantly. To make matters worse it was witnessed by a large number of elderly people who apart from a few gasps barely registered a flicker of surprise. Thankfully this wasn't a matter for the police, but the latest production at Keighley Playhouse who were staging a version of the classic horror tale – Jekyll & Hyde.

This was my first visit to this excellent theatre and I was immediately impressed with the friendly atmosphere. This was clearly a regular haunt for many people judging by the familiarity between staff and customers in the bar. The theatre on Devonshire Street is much larger than I expected which was surprising as I must have driven past it countless times and never noticed it. Despite what appeared to be a full house seating was spacious and comfortable and the acoustics were excellent. You can probably hear a pin drop. Unfortunately you could also hear the rustle of sweet wrappers and the recent cold weather brought a few too many coughs in to the auditorium, but the delivery from stage was easily audible. It's a shame to tag the whole experience as amateur dramatics as it feels anything

but amateur. The sets and lighting were excellent and the standard of acting was as good as many I've seen on a bigger stage. Mark Rundle as Dr Jekyll (and Hyde!) was outstanding and I particularly enjoyed Robert Lister as Utterson. He has such a natural presence on stage that you can't help thinking you've seen him a thousand times before. His eccentric character got plenty of laughs, particularly when he displayed his weakness for the port. Deborah Mouat played the uncouth Penny at full throttle, practically owning the stage as she swaggered around leering loudly in the face of the snooty Celestine. This gripping tale was brought to its inevitable conclusion as Jekyll's tragic death proved you probably shouldn't indulge in mind altering substances. The cast returned to the stage for enthusiastic applause and upon leaving I overheard many favourable comments from more seasoned clientele. Keighley Playhouse is well worth supporting. It draws upon the talent of hundreds of local people of all ages and has an excellent programme of forthcoming productions. I'm already looking forward to the next one which promises to be very special – The Railway Children – which is on from the 6th to the 11th December. It's also very affordable. Tickets start from just £4.00. See <http://www.keighleyplayhouse.co.uk> for further information.



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