

Viva's 'The Bakewell Bake Off' and 'Departure Lounge' on Friday 21st July 2017 at the Brook Soham.

Viva is going to take part in the Edinburgh Fringe, a high accolade indeed. As a consequence, the audience this night was treated to two musical plays, both of which will be presented at the Fringe.

The first was the highly amusing 'The Bakewell Bake Off' when the township of Bakewell was holding its baking competition. Under the directorship of Dan Schumann and Mary Barnes, the participants were all strong, credible characters: spicy doctor Pradeepta Smith (played by Radha Bilimoria), new boy postman Freddie Twist (David Blyth), sex-changed Henry now Henrietta Apfelstrudel (Frank Crosby), the gawky nun Sister Mary (Chloe Grimes), the promiscuous Tina Tartin (Vicki Jelleyman), health freak Mandy Macaroon (Ruth Lo), Christmas fanatic Holly Berry (Kate Weekes) and unrequited lesbian Flora Drizzle (Sammy Williams). Mix them together, and what do you get: a hilarious musical comedy further exacerbated by the shenanigans of the three contrasting judges. These were the easily swayed Suzie Sunflower (Emma Gilbey), the womaniser Hugh Drip (David Moat) and the domineering Griselda Pratt-Dewhurst (Anthea Kenna). Endeavouring to hold everything together was the over-the-top hostess, Victoria Sponge (Sarah Shorney) and adding delightful musical enhancements, was the vocal trio: the Cream Puffs (Kerry Hibbet, Laura Leonard and Sophie Plachcinski). Well crafted stage directions, first rate keyboard accompaniment by Mark Clough and hilarious timing also served to produce a most entertaining show.

'Departure Lounge' directed by Joshua Schumann with the cast, was presented after interval and was amazing. Few of us can ever claim to understand the teenage mind; however, I can truthfully say that this play gave me real insight. The Cambridge-born script writer, Dougal Irvine, gave us everything. In what appeared to be a bunch of loud-mouthed hooligans forced to wait in the departure lounge for their plane to take them back to England after an indulgent, drunken week on holiday in Spain, were four distinct characters trying to bond as only a bunch of adolescent teenagers would, while underneath they struggled to overcome their feelings of inadequacy, fear of the future and their hidden anxieties.

Almost immediately, we were drawn into the lives of these young emotionally immature males, while they waited for the plane, their 'A' level exam results and their new lives in the outer world. Pete (played by Simon Thompson), Jordan (Ben Clark), Ross (Joseph Hall), and JB (Lee Sherwood) with constant energy and highly-charged, macho antics, eyed the girls and in a drunken haze relived highlights of their holiday with flashbacks of the gorgeous Sophie (Emily Thompson) and their individual glamourised version of events. With highly appropriate Spanish-flavoured guitar music (played by Jazz Bullen) and excellent singing of angst-filled songs, these characters eventually revealed their true selves and in this short space of time grew up.

What a fantastic evening!