



## 'See How They Run' alight with laughter

By Alicia Anstead, BDN Staff

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Philip King's British farce "See How They Run" is about as inane as a script gets. There's a vicar, a vicar's wife, a gossipy church lady, an American soldier, an escaped Russian spy, and a maid given to chicanery. In the wrong hands, this show could be an insipid disaster that tests both your patience and the Indiglo button on your Timex.

The Ten Bucks Theater Company production of "See How They Run," which runs through Saturday at Brewer Middle School Theater, is in so many good hands, however, that even the outdated bad jokes are funny. It's all too rare when the stars line up and offer a cast that is as even as this one, but director Catherine LeClair has chosen a group of performers who burst onto the stage with a bang and keep crackling until the very end – two quick hours later.

As LeClair clearly knows, rampant speed is key to the success of a farcical plot, the summary of which would lead to a circular description of mistaken identities, switched wardrobes, emptied bottles of sherry, missed connections and a lot of doors. Here's all you really need to know: The story is a breathless, mad dash of goofiness. If you liked "Noises Off," you'll be in familiar territory with this 1940s relic about the village vicarage and the zany race that takes place among its occupants and visitors – unexpected and otherwise.

But, hands down, it's the acting that counts on this one. Julie Arnold Lisnet is outstanding as Miss Skillon, the snoop who invades the vicarage with uppity complaints, then guzzles a bottle of booze and proves herself a woman of lusty desires. As the American soldier looking for a night out with the vicar's restless wife, Ron Adams once again proves himself an actor of extraordinary comic ability and depth. It's not easy to combine those two qualities in a play as frivolous as this one, but Adams is one of the most natural and swiftly intelligent performers on local stages.

Old pros that they are, Robert Libbey, as the milquetoast vicar, and Kent McKusick as the vicar's confused uncle-in-law, are unstoppably amusing. Their lines are delivered with a very British aplomb. Rebecca Cook, as the vicar's wife, is whimsical and perky, and would be even more engaging if she didn't deliver quite so many of her lines directly to the audience.

Allen Adams, as a Russian spy, has one of the more bizarre roles in the play and renders the "Red" scare with unleashed, and at times over-the-top, horsepower. John Greenman and Keith Robinson come on in the last act as an additional reverend and police sergeant (respectively), and add a final punch of gut-busting humor.

Given the largesse and prowess of this cast, it's still tempting to say the show belongs, in some quietly sparkling way, to first-time Ten Bucks performer Alex Kelly, as Ida the maid. Kelly is a

refreshing ray of smart new talent and stands brightly as a gem in the ranks of this golden troupe. On opening night, the cast and technical staff – Josh Luce on lights, Putnam Smith at the sound board – pulled off the quick-fire plot and choreography with entertaining expertise, even when it came to minor gaffes. Hackneyed and predictable, “See How They Run” may not be the show for everyone. Don’t go to be enlightened. Go to be lightened. It doesn’t get any lighter – or funnier – than this.

Ten Bucks Theater Company will present “See How They Run,” 8 p.m. Jan. 24-26 at the Brewer High School Theater, 5 Somerset St. in Brewer. For information, call 990-4940.

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