

Review: The Play That Goes Wrong

By Suzanne Cleave

The Play That Goes Wrong, Theatre Royal Plymouth

Be prepared to laugh from start to finish (and even before the start!) if you get tickets for *The Play That Goes Wrong* – it is slapstick comedy at its very best.

Written by Henry Lewis, Jonathan Sayer and Henry Shields, members of Mischief Theatre, this show started out on the London and Edinburgh Fringe before touring the UK and beyond and returning to the West End in 2014.

The play within a play features the cast and crew of the Cornley Polytechnic Drama Society as they present the murder mystery ‘The Murder at Havisham Manor.’ However, things do not go to plan. In fact, nothing goes to plan!

The set starts off immaculate, like something out of an Agatha Christie ‘whodunnit’. We are first introduced to the deceased Charles Haversham (played by Jonathan Harris), who has to make subtle adjustments on the chaise lounge to ensure his body is in the correct position for his pulse to be taken.

From this moment, everything gradually descends into chaos – from a set that falls apart and forgotten lines to mistimed entrances and the sound guy’s missing Duran Duran CD, that is accidentally played at the worst possible moment.

The audience lapped it up. I wondered at one point if there was oxygen in the theatre, as the gentleman sat next to me was laughing that much.

There’s plenty of room for audience participation. Be on your guard if you are sat in the front few rows – you may be called on stage to assist with the set, or help look for Winston, the missing guard dog. One heckle from the audience was met with director

Chris remarking 'It's not a pantomime' – cue many shouts of 'Yes it is!'

Stand out performances were from Dennis Tyde who plays butler Perkins, a loveable but bumbling man who scribbles big words on his hand to remember them, but who still manages to pronounce every single one wrong. Then there is Max Bennett who plays Cecil Haversham, Charles' brother, who is delighted to receive any applause from the audience and stops each time to take a bow!

Yet despite all of the chaos, the members of the Cornley Polytechnic Drama Society keep calm and carry on, helping to deliver one of the funniest productions yet!