

UNDERPANTS IN BURLINGTON

THE ALDERSHOT PLAYERS packed the house last weekend for their opening night performance of *The Underpants*, a German farce adapted by Steve Martin from Carl Sternheim's one-act play. The setting is 1910 Germany, in a drab looking household just barely stocked with necessities. The vibrant personality of each character awakens the stage and juxtapose the backdrop, filling the space with playful energy and laughs.

Theo Maske comes home one day after hearing news that his wife's underpants slid down to her shoes quite publicly that morning. The whole town is awither with gossip about the event, and Theo is dismayed with embarrassment. When two men quickly inquire about the room he has for rent, he has no idea that their interest lies in a closer glimpse of the delinquent britches. Temptation and trickery soon close in on everyone!

The best performance of the night was given by Tyler Brent, who played a tall, dark and handsome poet swaying with romance and guided only by a forceful lust for Mrs. Maske. Tyler, who is well-known in the community for his sketch comedy troupe The Ugly Stiks, has a naturally funny quirk about his presence. He did an excellent job with his role and kept me laughing all night.

The lovely Heather Hunter was well cast as Mrs. Louise Maske. She indeed makes an attractive wife, but her hair

and dress are plain, so there is comedy in the fact that men are reacting to her with such intensity. None of the characters are all that intelligent, and Heather does the best job playing that up. Her facial expressions and physical comedy are right on the money and quite funny. Well done.

Mrs. Maske's curvy and bubbly upstairs neighbour Gertrude is a treat of a character (the classic eavesdropping-meddler-gossip-friend). Although sexy, actress Cher Lyford's portrayal is overly mannered and breathy, and lacks the flow of an accomplished performer. Nonetheless, the character is enjoyable; Cher simply busts with fun energy and bounce.

Mike Queripel, who plays man of the house Theo Maske, sets the tone for the play right off the bat when he enters and blows up over the incident with the underpants. Unfortunately, his delivery and physicality is simply not sharp enough for a husband in 1910 Germany, and the dynamic between characters is too casual as a result. He does have a commanding quality, but he doesn't own it in the proper fashion; he needs to be harsher and more arrogant. The relationships feel current instead of dated: there should be a very strict sense of everyone being 'in their place.' If that were the case, the fundamental comedy of the situation would be far more suc-

cessful and the action would be more believable.

Steve Martin is a fairly good playwright, and this adaptation is one of his better projects. The talent of director Scott Broe shines through; he gives his actors everything they need to make this an excellent production. (If their talent was up to snuff, he would have a fabulous little comedy on his hands.) The choice to spread the show over two acts is a good one, and beyond the set being extremely poor, the play is ultimately fun and easy to watch.

The Aldershot Players are one of the few theatre groups in the area who offer the dinner theatre experience, which always makes for a fun night. After all, who doesn't like combining food with entertainment? Dinner comes before the show, catered by Maitre D'. And if you eat too much, no problem. Undo that top button—you'll be right at home with *The Underpants*. ▼

[KATIE PENROSE]

THE UNDERPANTS
by Steve Martin
The Aldershot Players
April 22 - 24, April 30 - May 1 @
West Plains United Church.
549 Plains Road W. Burlington.
905.381.1441
thealdershotplayers.com