

Gags galore in play within a play

Noises Off
Written by Michael Frayn
Directed by Ravil Atlas
Reviewed by Georgia
O'Connor-Harding



JOYFUL SHOW: Miriam van Voorthuizen (left) as Brooke Ashton, Julian Anderson as Llyod Dallas and Emma Price as Poppy Norton-Taylor in the Canterbury Repertory Theatre's latest production *Noises Off*.

Slamming doors, crumbling relationships and a troubling plate of sardines all make for comedy chaos in the Canterbury Repertory Theatre's latest show.

A production for me is always a bold success if it has managed to give the audience a good hearty chuckle.

And in this case, Canterbury director Ravil Atlas's version of Michael Frayn's famous play *Noises Off* is no exception, with a talented cast making the audience roar with laughter.

Noises Off is a play within a play, showcasing a behind-the-scenes look at a rookie theatre group attempting to pull off a fictional, farcical production of *Nothing On*.

It's a quick-witted show, broken into three acts – the disastrous dress rehearsal, backstage during a midweek matinee and on-stage on closing night.

Act one was a brewing storm which revealed the maze of relationships within a cast on

the brink of collapse. Forgotten lines and incorrect cues all seemed to revolve around sardines getting taken on and off the stage.

The whole cast does a stellar job of foreshadowing what will be a tragic live show within the production, and every performer added fire to the hilariously diabolical, fictional outfit.

Act two – my favourite – is

when all hell breaks loose backstage during the live fictional performance. Shoelaces tied together, an outbreak of fighting and sardines getting poured down one performer's top is just the tip of the iceberg.

The show is extremely lovable and highly-relatable for two reasons: Most people can relate to having either been sucked into putting on an exceedingly ama-

teur production or gone to see one. The other reason is there is something familiar about being on the outside watching human nature take its toll in a disastrous situation.

Actor Miriam van Voorthuizen's role is a critical example of both cases. Her hilarious performance as Brooke Ashton, who speaks with no flow and carries on with the show unable to adapt to change, is acting we're all familiar with.

Terry McCartan did a wonderful job playing the overworked, tired stage manager Tim Allgood.

There was something about him catching a flying cactus and kicking the hell out of a broken door in a bid to fix it that stuck out as hilarious highlights for me.

It puts a smile on my face just thinking about all the chaotic drama.

And at the end of it all, does the show go on? You'll have to go along to find out.

•*Noises Off* will run at Elmwood Auditorium until December 3. To book tickets, go to www.repertory.nz/show/noises-off/