

The Vicar of Dibley

*Repertory Theatre
Elmwood Auditorium
May 9 – 19*

Repertory Theatre's latest offering, directed by Dimitri Gibara, is a hilarious, so-good-it-must-be-a-sin side-splitter that will keep audiences laughing their way out of the theatre every night.

The Vicar of Dibley begins with the arrival of Geraldine Granger, the titular vicar, to the village of Dibley, much to the shock and dismay of the parish council. They had expected a dowdy, middle-aged man much like their previous vicar had been (in 1953, anyway), not a "babe with a bob cut and a magnificent bosom"!

It's not long, however, before Geraldine's unorthodox ways, caring heart, and good humour win over all of the peculiar members of the council—all except for David Horton, who under the previous vicar had amassed complete control over the village goings-on, and does not particularly appreciate having to share his comfortable leadership with the lively Geraldine.

The conflict between David and Geraldine comes to a head over the budding romance between David's son Hugo and the verger Alice, a quirky young woman who had quickly become fast friends with the vicar. While Geraldine does everything she can to encourage the young lovers, David is mortally offended by Alice's very existence. If these two are able to stop butting heads at every turn, Geraldine may just officiate her first Dibley wedding...

The vicar herself is played by Celia Breen, who is both beatific and jolly good fun.

Her energy, and her laugh, is quite infectious, and she carries the show with ease. Even when she's in a serious frame of mind, Breen's Geraldine is charismatic and compelling, and keeps the audience rooting for her throughout all her travails. The Vicar of Dibley is a show that relies entirely on the quality of the actor playing Geraldine, and Breen absolutely nails it.

Geraldine's biggest antagonist, David Horton, is masterfully performed by Julian Anderson. David's character arc mostly takes him through several levels of annoyance, and Anderson subtly makes each level distinct. It's not all frustration in David's life, though, and he has some truly lovely tender moments, particularly with his son. Anderson has a strong sense of David's many facets, and shows them very well.

Jenny Hargreaves is astonishingly good as Alice Tinker in her first foray into acting on the stage. She is delightfully kooky, and her performance is unfailingly spot-on and positive. Her close bond with Geraldine and almost sickeningly cute relationship with Hugo come across very naturally, and provide plenty of fodder for Hargreaves to showcase her considerable comedic talent.

Stephen Dew as Hugo Horton is endearingly awkward, especially in the presence of his longtime crush Alice. Hugo has many hidden depths, and Dew makes those reveals both pleasantly unexpected and very amusing. His relationships with his father and Alice are incredibly sweet, and through

all he's put through, Hugo is a very sympathetic character.

The members of the parish council are all excellently played, with each of their individual foibles played up expertly. Dibley is clearly a community of colorful characters, and this ensemble capably balances each other out, with each member given their moments to shine.

Melanie Turner simply melts into the role of Letitia Copley as though she was made for it. She is indomitably cheery, and never lets the less-than- appreciative responses to her cooking discourage her from generously sharing her unique creations.

Jim Trott, played by Ian Lester, is utterly captivating—almost surprisingly so for a character whose lines are half made up of the word “no”. He fully embodies the character, creating a stark difference from his last Repertory role as the Prime Minister of the UK!

Russell Haigh plays Frank Pickle, the overly conscientious secretary of the parish council. He is an absolute pleasure to watch as he nitpicks and queries and is generally fussy. Haigh is as charming as he is eccentric in this role, and is completely flawless in it.

Owen Newitt, the lonely farmer with a heart of, well, probably brass, is played by John Ashton. His blunt, rough demeanor is a strong foil to the more sophisticated Geraldine, and Ashton plays this off very well.

Mia Aitken-Jones and Julia Holmes are delightful in their Repertory debuts as Child 1 and Child 2 respectively. Their time onstage is humorous and engaging, as they test Geraldine's wit and patience, and their reappearance later in the play continues in this trend. Erin Callanan and Nelleke Passchier also have highly entertaining

cameos, in which they truly show their fashionable sides.

The set is simple, but effective; the two main locations of the parish hall and the vicarage remain set up on opposite sides of the expansive Elmwood Auditorium stage, with lights being used to differentiate which location the action is currently in. This is aided by the use of a projected calendar above the set showing both the passage of time and current location (an easy and efficient method, though perhaps not the most elegant).

One aspect of the show I particularly enjoyed was the snippets of music used within the play to highlight (or censor) the dialogue. This is humorously and cleverly done, and I would have loved to hear more of it.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed watching *The Vicar of Dibley*. Gibara has put together a fabulous team, and the hard work they've all done has really paid off. Repertory's high-quality shows never disappoint, but this one in particular was a real pleasure, and the cast and crew should be very proud of what they've achieved here.

—Thomas Grey