

Anna Wostenberg

Arts Abroad

Dr. Chmel

20 January 2016

*The Play That Goes Wrong*

What a way to start off our stay in London! Based on the description that I had been relayed of this play, I expected it to be funny, but I certainly did not expect for my abdominals to hurt from constant laughter. Everything about the production was so professionally done that they succeeded in making it look amateur. The deceptively complex set and timing were just part of why this production was so fantastic. I was enraptured from the moment it began until the moment it ended. Performed by a cast of actors who truly understand physical comedy, *The Play That Goes Wrong* is one of the best-performed comedies I think I have ever seen.

My favorite character in the cast was Max, played by James Marlowe. Max constantly looked to the audience for gratification and approval that what he was doing was acceptable or funny or appropriate given the fact that everything was going wrong. He had this wonderful little smile that he would shoot at us and as the show progressed, he began to actively seek out opportunities to be on stage and gain the affections of the audience. In my opinion, these small idiosyncrasies are what really bring the characters alive. I love when I forget that this is a character portrayed by an actor on a stage. While the entire cast performed very well, Max's character seemed to capture my heart. I thought he was a bit strange at the

beginning of the play, but as his character grew more comfortable, he really began to own the stage. It was fun watching him grow throughout the show.

The chemistry of the whole cast was great. I could tell that they were all having a blast with this particular show, as they should. I loved how before the show and during the intermission, the actors came around the audience and introduced themselves and looked for their missing dog. I also liked when they brought an audience member on the stage to try to fix the mantle piece above the fireplace. In my opinion, these interactive touches make the whole experience more memorable. I do not know if it was written into the script that they should interact with the audience or if it was a directorial choice, but regardless, it was an excellent decision. It had me laughing even before the show began.

The quality of the production was spectacular. Because so many things go wrong, timing is vital, especially at the end when the huge walls and the chandelier fell. The actors had to be in exactly the right spot at the precise time otherwise they risked getting injured themselves. It was so much fun watching all the chaos ensue. I cannot even begin to fathom how exhausted the actors are by the end of the play because it is such a physically tolling production. People are getting knocked out and falling to the floor or falling from the second level or lifting unconscious bodies through windows and that cannot be easy work.

I was reminded throughout the play of another production I have seen, called *Noises Off*. I saw my brother perform in that production when he was in high school and I loved it as well. There is something so uncomfortably comforting about plays that do not run smoothly and I can only attribute it to the lesson I learned in *Avenue*

Q, "Schadenfreude: happiness at the misfortune of others!" But in all reality, comedies appeal to me more than dramas sometimes because they leave me feeling happy rather than with an existential crisis about the meaning of life. I feel that seeing *The Play That Goes Wrong* was the perfect way to start off our week in London because it was funny, light, irreverent, and also very well done. Out of the three plays we saw in London, this one was my favorite. While I will always have a spot in my heart for Shakespeare, *The Play That Goes Wrong* was a more memorable production and performance than *As You Like It*, which I so desperately wanted to love.

I do not mean to say that *As You Like It* and *Wonder.Land* were not good productions. I just mean to say that *The Play That Goes Wrong* was my favorite of the three. I am not entirely certain as to why I felt this way, but something about the play resonated with me more than the others. Perhaps it is because it reminds me of *Noises Off* and that is a very fond memory I have from my youth with my older brother. I also have a photo of my older brother and me from after his show and the smiles on our faces are very genuine. Whatever the reason for my adoring this play, I am very glad it was selected for us to see and I would gladly watch it several more times. There is so much going on at any given time that it is impossible to catch everything the first time. I would love to see what I missed because I am sure I missed a great deal. I found myself trying to watch the gentleman in charge of the sound effects because he was always doing something funny as well. I was very impressed with this show and loved every aspect.