

# British Theatre Guide

News, reviews, features and podcast on theatre across the UK

## A Chorus of Disapproval

Alan Ayckbourn

Theatre by the Lake, Keswick

(2009)

Anyone who has ever been involved with an amateur operatic society will recognise plenty of the characters and situations in Ayckbourn's masterful comedy.

Guy Jones auditions for PALOS Pendon Amateur Light Opera Society led by Dafydd ap Ilewellyn and is given the tiny part of Crook Fingered Jack in the latest production of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*. However Guy, without trying, gets tangled up in the romantic and business affairs of many of the PALOS members but finds that he can't please everyone, and in trying to do just that he gradually turns everyone against him. He also finds himself rising up the cast list as more and more people start to drop out of the show due to clashes of loyalty or Dafydd's temper tantrums.

The script shows Ayckbourn at his comedic best, with wonderful integration of dialogue, actions and the songs from the show within the show and some beautifully-drawn characters. There are some brilliantly-conceived and not at all obvious farcical situations superbly crafted for maximum comic effect, brought to hilarious life in Ian Forrest's superb production.

Richard Galazka captures the uneasiness and social awkwardness of Guy perfectly and hilariously, giving a wonderful portrayal of someone who is completely out of control of his own destiny. Simeon Truby is excellent as the Welsh amateur director who abuses his actors while his professional and family lives are falling apart, and Aimée Thomas is equally strong as his wife Hannah. Ella Vale and Katie Hayes get to reprise their vicious fighting from [A Midsummer Night's Dream](#), but this time as grumpy stage manager Bridget and spoilt Linda, with some superb fight direction from Kate Waters. Ben Ingles transforms himself into an awful sub-Galagher teenage boy that Linda and Bridget, for some reason, fight over.

Theatre by the Lake has created a very impressive production of this brilliantly-written and hilarious comedy that is totally absorbing and superbly-performed by every member of this thirteen-strong cast.

*Running until 4 November, 2009*

**Reviewer:** [David Chadderton](#)