

British Theatre Guide

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Kindly Leave The Stage

John Chapman
Baroque Theatre Company
Charter Theatre, Preston
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Few would argue with the supermarket-style value of a play that gives you two for the price of one.

John Chapman's double-decker of a farce imagines a stage performance of a play where one of the leading men loses the plot when he finds his wife has been having a backstage romance with another member of the cast.

Exit—stage left, right and centre—any chance that the play must go on, and instead the audience are treated to theatrical mayhem.

The fourth wall of theatre is not so much ignored as destroyed, and a particularly nice touch is that one or two cast members roam the stalls and audience bar during the interval.

On stage, cues are missed; lines forgotten; accents slip; and the scenery quivers almost as much as the confidence of young starlet Sarah (Talitha Willsea). By the time one old thespian, David Shackleton as Edward, makes a grand entrance in act two, his gin-soaked character simply lapses into Lear!

Of course, Michael Frayn's celebrated comedy *Noises Off* does something of the same. But where that play turns farce inside out to reveal all its workings, *Kindly Leave The Stage* inserts a play within a play to expose a public performance where private lives are unravelling. And if the characteristics are slightly different, then the characters are very much the same.

For the Norwich-based Baroque Theatre Company, this may be their 13th production in six years, but it's lucky for some theatres that there are still such companies willing to tour the provinces. This one is nearing the end of an impressive 33-date tour around the country.

Along the way, it may have lost a just a little of the rigorous discipline demanded of stage farce, and the final 10 minutes descend into frenzy, but you have to credit its eight-strong cast for the skill and stamina shown.

As the cuckolded husband, Ivan Wilkinson carries much of the physical and emotional burden of the plot but is a little too fast and furious with its delivery. He's not alone though in occasionally talking through the plentiful laughs.

Paul Cleveland and Patricia Derrick capture all the vanity and insecurity of some members of the acting class and Claire Bibby deserves ovation for being founder, producer, and an actor for a company that aims high and hits its target audience.

If her cast hadn't Kindly Left the Stage quite so quickly at the final curtain, they might have found themselves getting, and warranting, further applause.

Reviewer: [David Upton](#)