



## THE RECRUITING OFFICER

Rain or Shine Theatre Company

The Playhouse Theatre,  
Cheltenham

Friday 2th July 2022

By Simon Lewis



The year: 1706. The place: Shrewsbury (or Shrows-bury). Shropshire lads, beware: the Recruiting Officer (or should that be The Recwooting Officer?) is in town, seeking to boost army numbers by any means, however devious. A case of run for it or take the Queen's Shilling. They're not the only things being drafted, though; finding a suitable wife is also on the military agenda.

**Bristling with fans, fops and fortune-telling, here were Rain or Shine at their maniacal best again**, regaling the appreciative audience with director Jonathan Legg's highly entertaining workout of George Farquhar's Restoration comedy. The pace barely let up as the 7-strong cast delivered **another masterclass in multiple role-playing, expert timing, rapid costume changes, and all played out on a trademark minimal set**. Well, almost. Of the many Rain or Shine performances I have seen these past twelve years, this was easily the loudest. It seemed occasionally that they were still in outdoor mode, ensuring every word reaches every distant blade of grass and passing sparrow. Within the contained interior of the Playhouse, however, it made for an unfortunate case of overprojection, thanks to which it all got a bit frantic, with bits of the dialogue lost, amidst, (Shock! Gasp!) a few fluffed lines.

But no matter; it was still **vintage Rain or Shine**. I loved some of the characterisations, notably Ian Alldis' Santa Claus-ish Sergeant Kite, along with Ashley Shiers' magnetic portrayal of the dashing Captain Plume, pursued by Sylvia Balance, played with considerable dignity by the assured Pippa Meekings. Meanwhile, Emily Morozow simply smouldered as wealthy heiress Melinda, Rob Keeves was **utterly hilarious** as the affected Captain Brazen, sounding uncannily like Dr. Who's Tom Baker at times. John Cooper-Evans brought some stability to the proceedings, playing doleful Mr. Worthy with commendable gravitas, but leave it to elder statesman Anthony Young as the aptly-named Justice Balance to provide that extra anchor throughout this **jolly romp**, that is, when he wasn't dishing out platitudes as simpering maid Lucy.

Of course, it all ends happily. With all the matrimonial loose ends finally tied up, they signed off with a spirited rendition of Wild Rover (or possibly Wild Wover), **sending everyone contentedly away into the night**.

Rain or Shine are on tour with The Recruiting Officer until 2nd September. For details of performances please visit

**[www.rainorshine.co.uk](http://www.rainorshine.co.uk)**.