

Comic tale is a summer sensation

The Seven Year Itch The Playhouse

Picture : Matt Alexander 232347-6

If I had closed my eyes I could have been in New York City. The music, the accents, the sound of a baseball game. But instead the trans-Atlantic turmoil in which happily-married Richard Sherman, played excellently by Dominic Gittins, found himself was vividly brought to life at The Playhouse in Cheltenham.

There were no first night nerves here as the cast threw themselves whole-heartedly into this "will he, won't he?" comedy production by The Playhouse Company. Richard Sherman cut a convincing figure as a dithering, almost at times Mr Bean-like figure, caught between the devil and the deep blue sea as the absence of his holidaying wife Helen, portrayed amusingly by Victoria Long, coincided with the arrival in his life of a second, slightly younger female.

The Girl, played brilliantly by Claire Bolden, complete with drawling accent, long legs, fluttering eye-lashes and flirtatious poses, kick-started his mid-life crisis in some style.

The comings and goings of Dr Brubaker, a great character portrayal by John Morgan, brought yet more mood swings from poor Richard, with some tongue-in-cheek home truths thrown in for good measure.

The early appearance of Richard and Helen's son Ricky, played finely by eight-year-old Adam Crozier in his first Playhouse Company performance, reinforced the responsibilities held by the lust-struck Richard, as he became engulfed in a personal crisis. Director Jan Jones got this spot on, bringing this 1952 script bang up to date and showing brilliantly the agonies and excuses of the ill-fated, "loyal" husband. A clever use of lighting and script meant the audience were delighted and amused throughout the evening with flashbacks, conscience-pricking and hysterical imaginings.

Tom Mackenzie, played well by Ian Greenwood, served as a stark marker of Richard's loosening grip on reality - a grip loosened by lust, pride, ego and flattery

This fine comedy production is a must for would-be philanderers or those just wanting a good laugh.



• **SCORCHER:** Dominic Gittins and Claire Bolden

The Seven Year Itch runs at The Playhouse Theatre, Cheltenham, 7:45pm, until Saturday.
Ruth McDonagh

The Cast: Dominic Gittins, Victoria Long, Adam Crozier, Sandy Dronsfield, Carolyn Nicholls, Elspeth Slater, Claire Bolden, John Morgan, Ian Greenwood, John Lomas, Hayley Watts.