

THE FAIRY

Country: France/Belgium (93 mins.)

Year: 2011

Directors: Bruno Romy; Dominique Abel;
Fiona Gordon.

Cast: Bruno Romy; Dominique Abel
Fiona Gordon; Phillipe Martz.

Watching Laurel and Hardy painstakingly and painfully pushing that piano up the hill to the posh house at the top, one just knew what the eventual outcome would be. Yes, it would roll all the way back down, only for them to have to start again, thus illustrating the Myth of Sisyphus many years before this writer came across Albert Camus. Watching 'The Fairy' ('La Fee') a year ago or more brought back vivid recollections of childhood encounters with Laurel and Hardy, Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin on early (late 1950s) TV: and then, later, there was, Jaques Tati at the cinema: no subtitles needed, really!

As in their 2008 oddity "Rumba", Francophone clowns Abel, Gordon and Romy here mix Tati-esque sight gags (visual jokes!), physical theatre and divisive, Mighty Boosh-like whimsy: it's the kind of film that delights in sending its principals – Abel's social misfit hotel receptionist and Gordon's barefooted psychiatric ward escapee – to the seabed to cavort with carrier-bag jelly fish. Where Tati shaped his skits into a far grander vision, our hero and heroine seem content to juggle random motifs – scooters, lost dogs, the number 57 – into complete and utter 'dottiness' right through the film.

"The Fairy" is 'meticulously slight': it works very hard at telling the viewer that there is nothing else to take seriously in the film except the sketches themselves, and they come thick and fast. Thus there is Dom, hoping to settle down in front of the television, first meticulously attempting to make a sandwich while attending to the hotel reception desk, but being continually interrupted. At one point the ketchup bottle top becomes part of the sandwich. Will he notice? Will he swallow the top? At least break a tooth? (That's where the piano being pushed up the hill came back to me). While keeping this gag running, a customer with a dog wants a room. Dogs are not allowed. Customer goes away. Sandwich-making recommences. Customer returns. No dog: what could have happened to it? Room key is handed over. The man's case, however, begins to move across the floor of its own volition. We can guess where the dog is. Dom returns to his sandwich...

And so the sketches continue, linked by the evolving, unlikely romance between Dom and Fiona, a shoeless woman with no luggage who turns up at the hotel and claims to be a fairy who will grant Dom three wishes. After two wishes are granted – a Vespa scooter features in one of them – Fiona disappears and Dom tries to find her.

Once again this CFC season, we are in the streets of *Le Havre* as Dom begins his search for the love of his life. For me, the colour, lighting and framing of our first film were suggested in that of "*The Fairy*". When I first watched this colourfully burlesque film, with its surreal elements, I could laugh at the gags – some were hilarious – but I was also charmed by the relationship between the main characters. I'm looking forward to seeing it again. I hope you will be amused and cheered as we look forward to the Festive Season.

Peter Bunyan

Next film: *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*: Monday 7 January 2013.

**Don't forget! CFC Quiz Night. Friday December 14, 7.30pm at Moulsham Mill.
Tickets £5 each.**