



Society : Mortimer Dramatic Society
Production : Night Must Fall
Date : Friday 2nd June 2017
Venue : St John's Hall - Mortimer
Report by : Jeanette Maskell

ateur theatre

Show Report

This psychological thriller had been well cast and well directed; the audience were totally engrossed from the outset. There were ooo's and ah's as the plot developed and they became aware of what was happening.

Caroline Martin – (Mrs Bramson) – This was a cracking performance from this actress; she had pitched the character perfectly. Her controlling domineering attitude toward her fellow actors was spot on and the disdain displayed throughout was superb. Dialogue was energetic and powerful with great inflection. Being confined to a wheelchair for practically the whole play she was unable to move freely but still managed to portray an upright bearing and used hand gestures to maximum effect. I was particularly impressed with her hysterical outburst as fear set in having found herself alone in the cottage.

Paula Stenson – (Olivia Grayne) – As the penniless niece this young lady gave a stand out performance. She really understood the character realising that her loneliness was the core of the role. She was controlled and refined not letting her feelings run away with her; until act 2 when she really came into her own letting us see her true emotions and how she really felt about Dan even offering to lie for him. Her dialogue and visuals were vital and animated and through her body language she cleverly displayed her thought process.

Phil Collins – (Dan) – This young man was an absolute knockout! The diversity of his character was paramount to his portrayal. His affable personality was most effective as he wooed Mrs Bramson with his cheeky smile and lively banter. His ability to switch personality so quickly was truly commendable giving us a vacant expression and quiet eerie dialogue which was quite disturbing. The relationships he forged with the other characters were formidable and through it all there was a certainty of underlying vulnerability. His movement was excellent and I really liked the way he rocked and pulled at his hair when he couldn't control his emotions. His acceptance at being caught was a perfect end to a flawless performance.

Iain Vernon Wilson – (Hubert) – As the nice but boring admirer of Olivia this chap was great. His portrayal was well delineated with expressive striking dialogue which really brought the character to life. He moved naturally and easily around the stage and his stance was ideal for the role. His adoration of Olivia shone through and his despondence at being rejected by her was well characterised.

Tamsin Puddephatt – (Dora) – I enjoyed this young lady's skittish performance; especially her nervous clumsiness resulting in the dropping of the tray smashing a tea cup. Her dialogue was well delivered with good inflection and excellent projection. I felt the crying was a little noisy and overdone. (A tip you can portray effective crying by using the shoulders and controlled rapid breathing).

Megan Bush – (Mrs Terence) – This character has some of the best one liners in the play and this actress made the most of them. She had good comic timing playing the role absolutely straight which brought the humour out famously. Being the only one not frightened of Mrs Bramson her dialogue was droll yet perfectly balanced. Although she lost her lines on a couple of occasions she did not let it get to her and continued with assured confidence.

Suzan van Rhoon – (Nurse Libby) – I felt this young lady would have benefitted from more direction. She was very quietly spoken therefore needing help in the art of projection. Being directed to speak upstage did her no favours at all. She does however possess all the necessary skills to make an actress they just need to be honed and nurtured. I'm sure the next time she takes to the stage with a little more confidence she will develop her craft and become accomplished in her art.

Tom Shorrocks – (Inspector Belsize) – In charge of the investigation this actor made the character natural and instinctive. He was jolly and easy going manipulating the dialogue and action according to his own agenda. Dialogue was relaxed and expressive with excellent projection and diction.

Lawrence Picking – (The Lord Chief Justice) – Although this actor only appeared at the start of the play he was nevertheless integral to the plot. He stood in a courtly fashion and his dialogue was suitably imposing as he set the scene for the ensuing proceedings.

Mari Fleming – (Director) – assisted by **Iain Venon** This director had obviously worked extremely hard on producing some fine believable characters. She created great tension and kept a good pace throughout; however she also brought out the humour brilliantly. Staging had been well thought through and for the most part worked extremely well. However there were a couple of occasions when actors were upstaged. I loved the grouping on the settee with Olivia and Hubert sat and Dora and Mrs Terence stood behind. This was a creative and imaginative piece of theatre.

Lawrence Picking – (Producer) – This producer had clearly done their job! Everything ran smoothly without a hitch culminating in the finished performance. He had put together an excellent team both front of house and back stage. I am sure the director was extremely pleased with his efforts

John Bull – (Stage Manager) – This stage manager always runs a tight ship and this performance was no different. All he had to do was to ensure the curtain was pulled at the right time and keep the wings clear for the cast; and this he did impeccably.

John Bull/Phil Ramsell/Members – (Set Design & Construction) – This society is lucky to have skilled craftsmen that can build such a super looking set that is sturdy practical and effective. It really did look like a homely cottage living room with a front door and windows that looked out into the woods.

Nick Pounder – (Mural Design & Production) – By mural I am thinking it was the woodland that we could see through the windows? If so it had been expertly painted looked effective and gave added depth and perspective to the stage.

Judy Winter – (Wardrobe) – As stated in my summary I felt the costumes were not of any one given period. They did however suit the wearer and added colour to the stage. Dan's bell boy suit looked fabulous and both Dora's and Mrs Terrence's outfits were perfect for the characters.

Michelle Greatbanks/James Burton Stewart – (Props) – The stage was well dressed with authentic looking furniture. Personal props were all appropriate for the scene and their usage. I was disappointed that there was so much talk about smoking and yet there was not a puff of smoke to be seen. It is possible to purchase realistic looking cigarettes that will issue smoke and I feel this would have given meaning to the dialogue. I would have liked the table and chair to have been set a little further on stage; this would have helped the cast tremendously when walking behind it instead of having to squeeze round moving the chair every time. It would have been nice if the papers could have been new every performance rather than having to use torn ones.

Katja Hunt/Mary Cawley – (Lighting) – This plot created atmosphere appropriate to the piece with effectively sinister lighting. The use of the spot on the Chief Justice front of curtain worked exceptionally well and this was no easy feat as he was on the floor. I would have liked a clean black out at the end of scene 2 rather than a fade as I feel this would have created more impact.

John Makeham – (Sound) – This technician had excelled with this plot. Sound effects were perfect and expertly executed. The chiming of the clock was brilliant and added massively to the atmosphere of the piece.

Thank you

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