

Society : Mortimer Dramatic Society  
Production : Spygame  
Date : 26/10/24  
Venue : St John's Hall. Mortimer  
District : 13  
Reviewer : Cate Naylor

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Show Report

Thank you for inviting me to your theatre supper performance of Spygame. As always, we were made to feel very welcome so, thank you to Sarah for looking after us so well. A big thank you, also for giving me the opportunity to present Jean with the District 13 Flame Award for her services to both Mortimer Dramatic Society and Aldermaston Players. As Jean was unable to attend the NODA Celebration Day this summer, it was very special to be able to join the cast on stage to present her award at the end of the show.

Spygame, a play by Bettine Manktelow took us to remote house in the countryside where a group of strangers had been invited by a mystery person to audition for a reality television show. The five contestants who all seemed to have a missing family member in common gradually discover that they are being watched and tested to see who will make it to the show adding an element of tension and rivalry to the plot. Lots of twists and turns followed leading to a very final and somewhat unexpected twist in the tail right at the end.

### **Cast**

All the cast had good clear characters, which they maintained throughout even when not the centre of the conversation. They all had clear diction and in the most part excellent projection. It was clear that they were all confused as to what was going to happen and they built up the tension very well as they became more anxious and suspicious about the situation they were in.

### **Clive Solomons (Steve)**

Clive played the part of disapproving Steve with good delivery of his 'put down' lines and scathing remarks. He had a dry sense of humour which he put across nicely and it really suited his character. I liked the way he softened as he sat and chatted to Daphne, but maintaining good projection of his

voice when confiding in her would have avoided the drop in his volume and slight loss of lines. Clive moved well around the stage and had good stage presence even though his character was not dominant.

**Dawne West (Claire)**

Dawne was very confident in her portrayal of Claire. She looked very comfortable on stage and gave a very relaxed and natural delivery of the role. She interacted very well with the other cast members and had very good chemistry with Sam as they ganged up against the others. She showed some lovely changes in character as she became frustrated about what was going on and she had vivid facial expressions and reactions. Her diction, and fluidity in her speech was very clear and expressive.

**Mary Aukland (Daphne)**

Mary played Daphne with a no-nonsense attitude, and was quite matter of fact about not liking the company, nor particularly keen to give up any information about herself. She showed a nice change in character as she softened towards Steve and began to open up to him, and when she reappeared after vanishing, there were lovely reactions from her and the rest of the cast. Mary spoke with very clear diction and excellent projection, and we were in no doubt about how she was feeling about the situation.

**Sam Foad (Lloyd)**

Sam played the cocky male lead to good effect. He was arrogant and full of himself and adopted the role of the self-appointed leader. He was the first to break the rules by speaking to the others and asking questions and he became more and more obnoxious as he tried to wind straight Steve up. He neatly ingratiated himself to Claire and drew her into his scheme against the others to break more rules. The twist at the end when we discovered that he was behind the whole thing showed just how clever he had been to manipulate everyone without them becoming wise to his plan and without giving the game away to the audience.

**Jenny Deering (Sadie)**

This was a lovely character part which Jenny did superbly with great facial expressions and physicality. She played the less cultured telly addict, with some lovely gullible moments showing how unworldly she was.... or was she? She became progressively more neurotic and paranoid as the play went on

until she snapped and told Lloyd and Claire that she had murdered her husband! There was a tense moment, when she came in with a knife ready to murder again, killing the Major before anyone could stop her. A brilliant transformation from cowering to maniacal.

**Alys Codd** (Marie)

This was another lovely part to play, which Alys did so well. Initially a maid with a dodgy middle European accent, she had a dead pan expression and was a woman of very few words. There was a lovely twist when the guests had gone to bed, and she spoke with a very obvious English accent, and it became clear that she was part of the deception. Very well played.

**Tom Shorrocks** (Major Dan)

Tom was perfect as the over friendly Major who we didn't really trust. He did a great job of being welcoming to the guests whilst being straight down the line when it came to the rules of the game. He became increasingly agitated as things began to go wrong, and he was seeming to lose control, only to confess that he had been in on the plan set up by Lloyd. Tom spoke with a gentle Scottish accent which never slipped throughout the whole play.

**Creatives**

**Kerry Thomas** (Director) assisted by **Mari Fleming** (Producer)

The direction showed good organisation, with the main entrance up stage centre so that new arrivals could be clearly seen and heard. The acting was very good, and under Christie's direction, the cast brought this script to life. There were some lovely moments of awkwardness in the opening scene resolving to warmer friendships, flirting and mischievous scheming during the play. The climaxes at the end of each scene were very well worked and act 2 provided a good contrast to the awkwardness of Act 1, with much more scope for clarifying the relationships between characters. I was kept guessing to the end what the final twist would be and was certainly shocked at the turn of events. The cast all looked very natural and comfortable together and there was good energy on stage.

**Keith Graham** (Stage Manager)

The show ran very smoothly under the Keith and all the props arrived on time.

**Neil Johnson** (Set Design) with **Tom Shorrocks, Dyson England, Mari Fleming, Jeff Howman and Society Members** (Set Build) and **Mari Fleming** (Set Dressing)

The box set design was very well thought out, with the main entrance near the centre back so that entrances led to characters being clearly seen and heard. French windows and a service door provided two additional entrances that gave good variety and space to positioning onstage. The room was brilliantly decorated to look like a slightly dated hotel lounge with a dado rail and large flowery wallpaper. The spy hole in the painting was very well done, and the discovery of the camera there was most ingenious. The stark itinerary on the wall gave a hint of what was in store for the guests.

**Rob Wilderspin** (Lighting and Sound Design and Operation)

Sound and lighting were very good and on cue, with nicely subtle lighting changes. The stage was well lit with no areas of darkness at the edges and the half split stage lighting worked well to focus the audience's attention on the more intimate conversations whilst still being slightly aware that other members of the cast were quietly interacting. I particularly liked the night scene which relied firstly on torchlight making the after lights out scene very realistic and then on lovely blue wash as the curtains were opened to reveal the moonlight.

**Mari Fleming** (Costumes) **Kerry Thomas** (Make-up)

Costumes were good and clearly indicated the personas of the characters while also being everyday wear. Lloyd's loud shirt really suited his loud personality and Daphne's woollen dress, and long cardigan helped to paint a picture of her character. I liked that slight changes were made to costumes depending on the time of day. A particularly clever addition was the plasters which each cast member wore after they had had their blood test. The cast make up was well applied and subtle.

**Derek Spears** (Properties)

The props were well sourced and appropriate. There were lots of board games in the lounge and the scrabble box looked suitably dated for the time setting of the play. I was pleased to see tea in the mugs some of which I could see was poured into a large pot plant.

**Peter Allison** (The Home Chef) with **Jean Chapman** (Catering and Serving Manager)

We were treated to a delicious meal of toad in the hole with mashed potato and vegetables, followed by berry panna cotta and cheese and biscuits. I am always so impressed that the kitchen led by Peter and Jean can manage to serve such tasty food to a room full of people so smoothly. Thank you to all the lovely team who waited on us as well.

Thank you once again for a wonderful evening of good food and good theatre, it is always a pleasure to join you. And a huge well done to Jean for her NODA award.

I look forward to joining you again next year.

*Cate*

NODA London District 13 Representative