



Society : Chipperfield Theatre Group
Production Curtain Up On Murder
Date Saturday 25th June 2005
Venue Chipperfield Village Hall
Report by Lennie Self

Report

There was an anticipatory hush in the Village Hall on Saturday night as the audience waited with baited breathe to see who would be the next victim of the unknown murderer, and the unpredicted twist at the end certainly took most people by surprise. The sense of wonder was maintained until almost end of the play, when the unexpected audience participation suddenly turned the event into a melodrama, thus breaking the tension.

Director Lisa Calcutt had some very good ideas and under her tutelage some fine characters emerged. The tension was generally maintained, especially when the audience were staring at an empty stage, wondering what was happening elsewhere. Generally the pace was good, although it was very slow in Act one scene two. (Two young people at a nearby table were actually sending text messages at this point). There were some very good groupings, especially at the end of Act One when discussing Quentin' death ,and in Act Two scene One but on occasions cast members masked each other and there were a couple of unconvincing straight lines. The grouping for the curtain calls was excellent There were several occasions when individuals appeared to be talking out to the audience, rather than to each other.

The set was well designed to look like a somewhat dishevelled rehearsal room with accompanying appropriate detritus. The echoing footsteps of cast members entering through the auditorium realistically sounded like people walking along a pier, and using the side entrance also added to the realism of the surroundings.

The somewhat "creepy" background music was extremely well chosen.

There were some very good performances on Saturday evening.

Linda – Jo Halkett

Jo gave a very convincing performance. Her annoyance at Alex's flirtation with Sylvia was displayed well. She had some very good facial expressions, I loved the way she glared at Alex

Sandra – Lyn Hug

Sandra has excellent projection and gave a very positive performance .At times she displayed great passion and actually looked quite mad
She was very good in the final scene when talking about her brother Quentin and explaining her reasons for wanting to kill everyone.

Ginny- Anne Pinkus

What a talented actress Anne is. Whatever part she plays she enters completely into the part with very good characterization and excellent timing. She was completely believable as the timid Ginny.

Harry – Joe Heuson

Joe Heuson is another very good actor. He had a very good cockney/estuary accent when playing the caretaker and was very dramatic at the end when revealed as Quentin's older brother and the joint instigator of the evenings macabre proceedings, and finally as the director of the "play within a play" (what a superb twist to the evening's events).

Alex- Rob Hine

In their first scene I was not convinced that Sylvia and Alex were lovers, but as the story finally unfolded I wondered if their initial stilted performance was really "actors playing amateur actors". As the evening progressed Rob/Alex settled down and gave a fine performance. He has excellent projection and bearing however, he must resist the temptation to wave his arms about. His pathetic cowardly pleading was extremely effective.

Sylvia- Lisa Heuson

As mentioned above I was not immediately convinced that Sylvia was in love with Rob, and as the story unfolded you realised she still had feelings for Martin. She was ideally cast as the sophisticated leading lady and was very impressive in the latter scenes.

Martin- John Oglesby

Martin also had excellent projection and his quick thinking covered a hesitant moment in the dialogue. He was impressive in his dramatic scene with Sylvia. He too made occasional unnecessary arm gestures.

Moppet- Jenny Henson

Jenny Henson is an absolute natural on stage. She created a totally believable character, and was also very good as "Jesse" in the play within a play within a play.

The lighting and sound effects were very good, especially the storm and gloom. If the house lights had been taken down to half after the interval the audience would have settled down sooner.

The costumes were excellent, all characters being appropriately dressed.

As always the society had obviously made that extra effort to create a suitable atmosphere for the evening and the "notice board" in the foyer was a very effective idea.

I have a couple of organizational criticisms. Despite the reminder that the performance started at 7.30 it was actually nearer 7.45 when the performance started on Saturday. I did not like the arrangement of the tables. It was difficult to get into the seats at the far sides of the hall and they would surely have been hazardous had there been a need to evacuate the hall.

Thank you for a very enjoyable evening. It was a good choice of play, well performed and the cast should all be proud of their achievement.

With best wishes

Lennie