

MURDER IN PLAY

Written by Isma



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Overall score - 3/5

Murder In Play by Simon Brett, 12th October 2019, at The Place Theatre, Bedford

Starring: Bridget Peirson-Davis (Lady Dorothy Cholmondley), Daniel Reay (Major Pirbright), Jess Dawes (Lady Virginia Cholmondley), Marian Barron (Mrs Puttock), Tracy Butler (Triggs), Richard Moon (Mr Popadopoulos), Pete Bing (Boris Smolensky - director) and Trysh Kollarikova (Pat – stage manager)

This performance is brought together by Bedford Drama Company, which started in 1929 and has been going for 90 years! The play is a tragedy with comedy in between to keep the audience gripped and entertained.

To set the scene, red lighting and smoke effects are used to signify evil and that perhaps a murder is going to take place (as suggested in the title). Bright lighting and striking music are used to focus in on the stage and the actors. In one particular scene, Mrs Puttock stresses 'murder by stabbing' – Mr Popadopoulos is the victim. Gestures and freeze frames are used to represent their emotions and put emphasis on important parts in the play.

The setting is after the First World War, where costumes worn by characters signify their standing in the play. For example, Major Pirbright wears a uniform to outline his

high position as a soldier. However, he is affected by shellshock: he twitches and uses repetitive movements that show his anxiety within the play.

The story is set in a decorative, posh family home – Priorswell Manor. A particular furniture piece that stood out for me is the cupboard that kept opening and shutting: as a result, Mr Popadopoulos (who was hiding inside) fell out repeatedly. In the final moments, he is left trapped in the cupboard. Whilst this was funny, it could also be representing the characters and how they can be seen as trapped in their lives. An example of this is the overwhelming control the director, Boris, has on all of them. This can be especially illustrated with reference to Pat, who is constantly controlled and kept busy.

Props are used such as a carving knife and a decanter, which plays a significant part in the lead up to the murder. Furthermore, the deaths that are played in the story cleverly hide the actual tragedy which is masked in suspense. This made the audience question what is going on. The death is a real mystery to work out for those who are watching: they are left wondering what is happening as the first half finishes.

The second half of the show is all about working out the murder mystery. Triggs, who leads as the maid in a black maid costume, now has a more prominent role in the play. Alongside Major Pirbright, they work together to find out who the real murderer is.

I would recommend this production to teenagers, as the content displayed is on a mature level. This play is essentially a play inside a play, where clever hints and gestures are used to represent the upcoming death. It is an engaging way of telling a murder story, which kept me thinking, analysing, laughing and in suspense.

If you would like to find out more about Bedford Drama Company, head to this website: www.bedforddramacompany.org.uk

This review can be viewed on The Place Backstage by heading to this website: <https://findtheplacebackstage.wordpress.com/2019/10/23/murder-in-play-review-by-isma-begum-aged-14/>