

Performances highlight 'Night Must Fall'

Review

by Mike Turner

Give the Georgetown Little Theatre group credit for going out on a bit of a limb with their latest dramatic offering which opened at John Elliott Theatre last week.

Night Must Fall could hardly be called the usual fare local theatre-goers may have come to expect from GLT.

For one thing, Night Must Fall is longer than most previous efforts, and tends to drag in the early going, which could tax some audience members unaccustomed to lengthier servings of the theatre.

And the suspense is somewhat diminished with disclosures that are made early on in the play.

The GLT also found themselves in competition with other groups in town who were staging special events themselves. In fact, Friday's presentation scarcely drew 100 people.

But above all this, Night Must Fall succeeds thanks to some stellar performances on stage - and how!

Night Must Fall was written by Emyln Williams, a Welsh actor-playwright, who incidentally created this work with himself in mind for the lead role of Dan.

The focus throughout the play is "the sitting room of Forest Corner, Mrs. Bramson's bungalow in Essex, in the 1930s." Great attention has been paid to the detailing of the set, right down to the invalid Mrs. Bramson's wheel chair, on loan from Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

The play opens with the disclosure of murder, two in fact, for which the accused is to be duly punished. For this, director Ron Hill dons the robes as Lord Chief Justice, prior to taking up his directorial duties.

From there, we go to Essex, and

are introduced to the main players, and learn the time frame is after the first murder and prior to the second.

Mrs. Bramson is quite a nasty old coot, confined to a wheel chair and blaming the rest of the world for it. Her niece, Olivia Grayne, can do little but meet the demands of her aunt since she cannot afford to leave.

Olivia is given a means of escape though, by would-be suitor Hubert Laurie, who would like nothing better than to take her away with him.

Nurse Libby tends to the many aches of Mrs. Bramson, while the plucky cook Mrs. Terence and the pathetic maid Dora handle the household duties.

It's not until Dan comes on the scene though that things liven up. Dan is drawn into the lives of the others after a tryst with Dora puts her in the family way. In short order, it becomes apparent Dan has other things on his mind than doing the honorable thing.

It's Robert McCarrol in the role of Dan who really carries the play. As stated earlier, the role of Dan was written by Williams for himself, a Welshman. Mr. Mc-

Carrol is not Welsh but you'd have a difficult time believing it from his performance.

What's even more amazing is the fact that he was a late replacement for the role of Dan, and was heavily restricted in his preparation time.

But Mr. McCarrol puts the audience through the entire gamut of emotions, with depictions of a borderline simpleton to a calculating schemer.

Vera Macdonald as Mrs. Bramson plays her role to the hilt as a bullying spinster who allows herself to be taken in by the young Dan. Her performance late in the play leaves the audience sharing her fear in an eerie way.

Margi Gibson is Mrs. Bramson's niece, who like the audience, is taken on an emotional ride courtesy of Dan. Unfortunately, she doesn't know when to get off. Ms. Gibson captures the essence of Olivia, who is plain and not as much in control as she thinks she is. Her vulnerability leads her on a dead end trail.

Most of the laughs in the play belong to Margaret Eggleton, as Mrs. Terence.

She gives no quarter to anyone, and particularly not to her employer, snapping back with quick one-liners.

The role of Dora is played by Jacky Willows who does a fine job as the milquetoast maid, with a "pardon-me-for-living" timidity.

Doug LaDoucer has the role of Hubert and Adele Armstrong is Nurse Libby. Both give fine performances in more supporting roles. Nurse Libby helps accentuate what a pain Mrs. Bramson and all her pains are, while Hubert is the alternative to Olivia's "other choice."

The cast is rounded out by stalwart Ron Hunt, playing the role of Inspector Belsize with appropriately British style. When things begin to wander a bit, he pops in to fill in the storyline and direct the audience's attention.

The mood of the play is put across well, but the bottom line is it's the actors who make this so enjoyable.

Robert McCarrol's performance is well worth seeing. Night Must Fall continues tonight (Wednesday) through Saturday at John Elliott Theatre.



The performances in Night Must Fall are well worth seeing. Here, Nurse Libby, played by Adele Armstrong, provides Mrs. Bramson, played by Vera Macdonald, with her medicine. (Herald photo)

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