

TIPTOE THROUGH THE TOMBSTONES

Well, F.A.D.S, what an entertaining we were given. This play, gave those of us who remember Tomb with a View another chance to revisit the very peculiar Tomb family.

Interestingly enough, Norman Robbins returned to similarities for his characters, even though they were from a different generation: Henrietta, not unlike Emily in her dress sense, Athene, rather similar to Dotty Dora: and of course, amongst others, the old family solicitor. Hamilton Penworthy, having been killed off, in this one we had Mortimer Crayle. Along with the other usual suspects of Secretary, visitor etc etc.

At this point, I have to say that, in my opinion, Mr Robbins tried a little too hard to pepper the script with red herrings, and complicated reasons as to why people had to die. It made the first part a little slow, once all the characters had been introduced to us, there was quite a lot of plot setting which, as an audience member it was a lot to take in and remember, in our efforts to work out "who dun it"

But, that is the fault of the author and is a reflection of the play and not the performers.

Carol, as a first time director you certainly chose a 'belter' to cut your teeth on: and by and large you did a very good job in keeping all your cast together and working as a team to create believable characters. You might like to consider how often you use DSL and DSR as moves especially when there is a lot of cast on stage. I can appreciate how easy it is to place cast nearer the front but sometimes I felt there were too many crossings of the stage. Make more use of US Centre where possible. Could I ask, was it your idea to use a different person to play the clown? I am not sure that the idea really worked. There seemed to be a costume problem on the night I came, with it not being properly fixed at the back: also, could you please show whoever it was how to bow correctly. It would have been lovely to see some large hand flourishes.

The set was very striking, and that lovely conservatory, which had us almost believing there was a dead body in it!! Would it have been possible to have had a few more books or ornaments on the bookcase that opened to reveal a secret passage? They perhaps would've gone some way to have hidden the hinged section. I understand that these things are not easy to do and perhaps I am being a little picky. Well done to the props, and costume ladies, too. Great job. The way that decanter went on and off stage it must've been a nightmare keeping tabs on it.

At this stage I comment on individual performances. However, this time I am going to be a little more general, as, on the whole, everyone did very well indeed.

Simon's 'gay' character was wonderfully held throughout, even if I did think it was OTT, which, of course, as we later discovered was on purpose. Karen's 'maid' was a delight to watch. Her ill fitting dress and silly glasses all helped to not only create a disguise but a great character part to get to grips with. Lovely comedy moments which kept the audience amused and threw us all off the scent.

Sandie gave us a stern Zoe, very matter of fact and to the point. Well acted throughout using good posture to give a stature to your character which left us thinking that Zoe would not be a big part!!!

Plaudits must go to Vic, Julie and Chris who executed their roles with great aplomb. However, Vic, I must ask, were the asides to the audience your idea, the director's or written in the script? I am not a great lover of 'breaking the fourth wall', except for Pantomime, of course. Having said that, the audience around me enjoyed them greatly! Bob, what a lovely character you had again. Another solid performance. Helen. You did very well as Athene. What a dotty character, very enjoyable to watch.

I have to say a huge thank you to Luke for providing the eye candy, and making an older woman very happy. You did very well in convincing us you had really broken down, and wearing that costume couldn't have been easy. However, I just couldn't believe it when we eventually found out the relationship between Larry and Maurice. But again, this could be the fault of the author. And last, but not least, Claire. My goodness, what a vamp! Fabulous part to play and you did it so well. Congratulations.

I realise that this little critique might sound a little 'lummy' in parts, but that is because I really enjoyed the evening and I thought you played very well indeed. (although I wasn't awfully keen on the curtain music.....)

I look forward to seeing Season's Greetings.

Marlene.