

This is a play with which I was unfamiliar, however, it's author is very well known and right from the start I was waiting for the twist, knowing full well it wouldn't come until almost the end! It's a well written play with enough red herrings to feed a nation, popping up all over the place. It certainly keeps the audience guessing.

And, speaking of which.....I loved that soundtrack before curtain up...all those tunes from various detective TV themes....really did have all the audience guessing.

As the curtain rises we find ourselves in the front room of the local doctor, Dr Richard Forth. The room is getting a spring clean by home help/cleaner Dorothy Livingstone played by Pat Attree under instruction from Barbara, the doctor's wife, played by Sarah Johnson. During this initial opening dialogue we learn many things which set the scene for the rest of the play. We soon realise that Dorothy is not only a cleaner but a village gossip. We see that Barbara is a sickly wife but manages to make a disturbing discovery amongst the books. Sarah, as the main character played her part very well indeed, and was convincing throughout as the sickly wife, who, despite the whirlwind romance and marriage to the doctor appears to be constantly sick and taking to her bed at every convenient moment. A very strong and impressive performance from Sarah. Pat coped very well as Dorothy despite lacking pace on occasions but nevertheless gave a credible performance especially when voicing her opinions on the visitors to the house.

Once such visitor is the elegant Julia Moore played effortlessly by Kathryn Routledge. I was so surprised to read later that this is her acting debut. She brought Julia's sophisticated yet snobbish character to life. Sexily seductive and clearly believable that there had been something between her and the doctor before his marriage to Barbara and her disappointment at being "shelved".

This is a subject raised by the neighbours, henpecked Alan and bossy Mary Haigh played by Clive Greig and Elizabeth Toon. This couple clearly providing the comedy element to the play. Clive and Elizabeth worked well together and although some lines could've been delivered a little quicker, Elizabeth's timing when Mary was stopping yet more of Alan's anecdotes brought the best laughs of the evening.

Of course, in any whodunit, or perhaps, in this play, who will do it, there is the inevitable arrival of a stranger, in the guise of Eric Dawson played extremely well by Harry Rippon. This apologetic, wimpering character, comes in search of his former girlfriend Grace, who he says married a Doctor Forth, and delivers some interesting but disturbing information about the doctor's past, and sows the seeds of suspicion over Doctor Forth and his real motives. The character gave Harry a chance to put his creative skills to good use, especially when delivering a character twist at the end.

Rounding off our cast list is Doctor Forth. This almost pompous at times, ill-tempered and bossy character is played to great aplomb by Dennis Harrison. Very believable as a country doctor having fallen for the "charms" of Barbara despite having more than a "medical" arrangement with Julia. Dennis had great body language throughout, and left me in no doubt that he could've killed his first wife!!

As usual the set is well presented and dressed. Good use of props, especially all those books in the bookcase. Just out of curiosity....was that garden backcloth last used in Amorous Ambassador?

It is lovely to see so many new faces and I look forward to seeing more of them in the future.

Congratulations must go to Yvonne for a play well directed and to the whole team for a most entertaining evening. I am sure most of the audience left, as I did, thinking " Well, I never expected that!"