

## **NODA**

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I was very pleased to be asked by my colleague, Bryan Craven, to stand in for him at the Carriageworks Theatre, to review Cosmopolitan Players latest play. Like many amateur groups, this play has been 'waiting in the wings' for two years due to the pandemic. After on-line rehearsals and a couple of cast changes, the company were able to present this amusing play in the Studio of the Carriageworks. This intimate space worked perfectly for the production, skilfully directed by Jan Morrell, with a great team of actors bringing the tale to life (or death, as the case may be!).

The premise of the play, written by Derek Webb, centred round the home of Geoffrey and his wife Caroline - Geoffrey had decided to hold a Murder Mystery Dinner. Now, I am hopeless at 'whodunits' - I watch many TV adaptations of Agatha Christie's Miss Marple and Poirot and never guess the murderer correctly - I was daunted to be given a 'suspect sheet' on entering the theatre and asked to guess who the murderer was at the interval - what followed was an entertaining and hilarious evening, one that I will remember for a long time!

Geoffrey (played with plenty of bluster and bossiness by Richard Hunt) owns a vacuum cleaner company, which is doing very well, thanks to Tim, his chief designer, (Graham Siddle at his laconic best, enjoying more than a little tippie!) - who comes to dinner with his wife Anna (convincingly played by Emily Cutts). Joining at dinner are an array of Geoffrey's staff; we had the accountant, Martin and his slightly inebriated wife Lydia (played with gusto by Matt Hill and Emma McGrath); daft Nigel and the lovely Nicola (good characterisation from Lee Sharatt and Leah Hamilton); Duncan from IT and the sexy Tanya, in charge of costumes and props for the mystery evening (excellent comedy touches from both); Caroline, Geoffrey's long-suffering wife, played perfectly by Gillian Myers. Geoffrey had decided to invite the famous author, Agatha Crusty, (she informed us it should be pronounced Crewsty!) played with great style and precision by Carolyn Craven. The actual dinner never gets underway because the first real victim is Tim - and the remainder of the play revolves around a violent storm and rain, cutting off the guests in a large house and in the middle of nowhere! All very Christie!!

There is another murder, an attempted strangulation and a pretend murder before the redoubtable Agatha solves it all by herself in true mystery style - meanwhile trying to sell copies of her latest book - the plot of which is remarkable like the events surrounding the mystery dinner! To explain the plot further would be impossible, so I will leave it there!

I have already mentioned Jan Morrell as Director; she gave a lot of attention to the staging of the play in a relatively small working area and had the benefit of well-cast actors, who gave solid performances with clear diction. Steve Morrell was Stage Manager, with Paul Harding for excellent sound, Jane Curtin for Props and Elaine Jackson for Prompt.

I always admire Cosmopolitan Players for their commitment to drama over the years and it was a pleasure to see them once more in the theatre - I understand there may be another Agatha Crusty in the future, set in a Spa! By the way, as expected, I didn't guess the murderer or murderers - it was.....

Well done to you all!