

Wickham Bishops Drama Club

Inspector Drake's Last Case

Directed by Pauline Roast and Ian Lodge

Performed at Wickham Bishops Village Hall on Friday 8th April.

The opening of Act 1 was Sergeant Plod played by Sam Knott challenging to us to solve the murder we were about to witness. Sam delivered the lines in a suitably menacing way to set up the murderous theme for the evening. Next we witnessed the murder of Mrs Gagarin leaving us wondering 'WHODUNIT'.

The curtains open to the living room of the Gagarin home, with the various characters waiting to be introduced. A great set with lots of comedy details built in, including the red herring on the wall. Enter Inspector Drake, played by Graham Pipe, to a comedy crash with a warming pan which is repeated several times incorporating Miss 'Duck', as Inspector Drake unravels the confusion between Guest the butler, and Butler the guest; and Gardener the cook, and Cook the gardener.

Victor Gagarin played by Jack Williams commanded the stage well. He had a clear voice, and interacted well with the rest of the cast. He sustained the limp throughout and managed to stay focused and in character. Catherine Stott played the confident and seductive Miss Duck, the not-so-secret lover of Victor Gagarin.

Mr Butler, the drunken guest was portrayed well by Ashley Saunders, staying in his drunken state consistently. I particularly enjoyed his explanation during the hovering! Len Howard played the role of Mr Guest the butler really well, consistently remembering the use of his hearing device.

Mr Cook the gardener, played by Roger Lyons did a great job; he was always clear vocally even when delivering quieter lines. His nervous temperament was visually presented to us, and his relationship with Mrs Gardener was easy to see. Linda Burgess delivered a confident performance as the cook, hiding her relationship with Cook.

Sergeant Plod and Inspector Drake made a great pair. Both have great comic timing. Graham Pipe delivered a confident performance, playing the bumbling inspector. Both gave strong performances and kept the pace of the show moving. Mary Ship, played by Jane Smith had a small role but did it well.

All the confusion throughout the show was handled well by the cast, and generally the lines were delivered well. There were some moments when actors started to speak before the laughter from the audience had subsided and so we lost some of the lines and potentially missed important clues! There were a couple of moments where individuals seemed to lose focus and almost corpse, but they managed to just stop themselves. There were lots of really good visual gags, as I mentioned earlier - the warming pan and the joke about the washing powder. The fantastic twist at the end (which I won't divulge and spoil for anyone who hasn't seen the show) was the culmination of all the scenarios played throughout the show.

Overall a good performance, supported by a good set and complimentary sound and lighting. Congratulations to everyone involved.

Reviewed by Alexandra Berriman. District 8 representative and Youth Adviser.