

A Spot of Murder by Geoff Bamber

Wickham Bishops Drama Club

Directed by Sue Matten

There is nothing better to fill a Village Hall than 'A Spot of Murder'. Wickham Bishops Drama Club chose this little known play as their Summer production. I was intrigued as I had never heard of this play and there was little to find out about it on the web so went along to play detective and search out the clues.

The tabs opened with some suitable dramatic music to a large living room which was beautifully furnished with sofas, sideboards, and lots of splendid props. This society is blessed with a huge stage and a great way of finding furniture and props. These props, I deduced with my sleuthing cap on, were from one of the members who was having her living room decorated so even her carpet got used. I can honestly say I haven't seen such a great set for a long while.

The play opens with Mrs Mildred Gaskell (Linda Burgess) who is the housekeeper. Married three times, she tells us her husbands all died of stomach problems. Ah ha she is obviously going to be the murderer. Looking like butter wouldn't melt in her mouth and very dutiful and quiet who would suspect her??

With her is Gloria Towcaster (Leigh Perry), a sexy young woman who is helping theatrical diva Corrina Marcham (Pauline Roast) to write her autobiography and Corrina's husband Felix an artist (Charlie Willett). With his obvious interest in Gloria, I wonder if the two of them are going to be the murderers to get rid of his wife and live together. Hmmm the plot thickens.

Then onto the scene glides Madam Zareza (Debbie Irby) in a fabulous green and blue costume banging her tambourine and throwing out incense and being wonderfully over the top as a tarot card reader and psychic advisor to Corrina. I watch her steal a book from the sideboard. Ah ha so she has something to hide??

Thank goodness, the Police enter. Now I might get more clues from DI Gareth Trench and PC David Pendlebury. (Ross McTaggart and James Milne) Can they solve a murder that hasn't been committed yet?? Yes all this has happened and no murder, what can be happening??

To add to my detective problems another suspect walks in, Doctor Louise Foskett (Jordan Shynn) very forthright and so strident you feel you could not answer this lady back. Norton Peveril (Graham Pipe) arrives next as the wonderful artistic theatrical actor who has worked with Corinna in the distant past and has been invited to come and talk about her memories for the book. Why does he hide The Stage newspaper in his jacket??

Finally the Reverend Artemius Sprule (Nick Hewes) is dragged in after falling down a hole in the garden. Completely muddled and confused he adds to the suspects on my list.

With three acts and a form to tick who the audience think is the murderer of Corrina who dies at the end of Act 1 is, we have a show of possibilities and 'who done it'!

This society always have great costumes and sets so full marks to Ken Matten, Ashley Saunders and Len Howard for set and Jenny Higgins and Nicola Thomas for costumes. Lighting and Sound were excellent (Robert Brown) and this was altogether a good production. Well done for dressing the hall and lighting it, which is sometimes forgotten and really adds to the realism of the set. Congratulations to Director Sue Matten for all the hard work that went into this production.

Some excellent performances from Graham Pipe as Norton Perveril , He exudes professionalism and knowledge of his character on stage and is always a joy to watch. Debbie Irby as Madam Zareza was very funny and had good comic timing. I loved the pairing of the detective and young policeman. Both worked very well together and young James reminded me almost of Pyke in Dads Army with his great expressions and stance.

Doctor Foskett (Jordan Shynn) was very dominant on stage and had a clear projection that I could hear really well. Pauline Roast had a ball on stage as Corrina the diva. I had visions of Judith Bliss in Hayfever in her performance and she looked like she was loving every minute of her role.

Felix Marcham (Charlie Willett) the unfortunate husband of Corrina, totally took to his character as the artist looking suitably absent minded on set. Sometimes a little quite though.

Mildred Gaskell (Linda Burgess) , Gloria Towcester (Leigh Perry), Rev. Sprule (Nick Hewes) had their characters totally right for the roles but also sometimes a little quiet and maybe some warm up work before the show might help . I asked a friend who was at the back of the large hall if she could hear everything and she also said she had problems hearing some of the characters.

This is a very friendly group who work very hard for just two nights. I applaud them for how much they must have to work to get everything up and running in just one night. . Thank you so much for inviting me to come and see this production. I look forward to seeing you all at the NODA Awards Gala Day where you are up for best drama nomination for your last production of Allo Allo.

Christine Davidson

Noda District 8 Rep.