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Group: Betchworth Operatic & Dramatic Society
Show: Murder On The Nile
Venue: Betchworth Memorial Hall
Date: 11th May 2023
Director: Barbara Hardy

Murder On The Nile is a stage adaptation, by Agatha Christie, of her novel *Death On The Nile*...which, itself, started as a play called *Moon on the Nile*.

The house was busy and enthusiastic. Lovely period music serenaded us before the show. The colourful programme was crammed with information on the production, the cast and good background information. Ian Stone accompanied Sarah Jane Weston in a delightful *Frankie and Johnnie*.

The scene was the saloon of the Nile paddle steamer *Lotus*. A simple design, but very nicely decorated and furnished...the ideal setting for all of the action.

Sound and Lighting were well used throughout; and this helped greatly to create atmosphere.

Props and furniture had a lovely, period feel...very suitable for the time and place...and they were always used naturally.

Costumes were of a generally 1930s appearance, with the ladies' outfits more attractive and accurate than those of the men. *Canon Pennefather's* outfit was a modern compromise, but it's difficult to visualise a period alternative. Hairstyles and make-up were right for the times.

The play is essentially about a murder-mystery house-party transposed to a Nile river cruiser; with a rich crop of vivid characters...or a vivid crop of rich characters. It certainly worked, as we felt very close to the action and it was (unexpectedly) very funny.

Helen ffoliot-ffoulkes, played by Christina Usher, was delightfully brittle and snobbish; whilst Kelly Cross played her put-upon niece, *Christina*. Both were good characterisations.

Stephen Tickell played *Smith* as a rather muted and sardonic champagne socialist; and *Canon Pennefather*, the investigator, was played by a calm and fluent Linda Slater.

A flamboyant Diane Mayall gave *Kay Mostyn* the arrogance and self-indulgence that won her enemies onstage and off. We guessed she was for the chop. *Simon Mostyn* (Neil Mayall) appeared devoted to his new wife, but was sinister and pre-occupied. Good playing by these two.

Roger Nelson excelled as *Doctor Bessner*, giving an effusive, well-rounded performance. Emőke Soproni, as *Jacqueline de Severac*, acted strongly with a good range of emotions; but, at times, her diction could have been clearer.

Julian Edney appeared to enjoy himself as the *Steward*, always obsequious to the passengers whilst laughing up his sleeve. Lucy Hamilton was a forthright *Louise*, the maid. Johanna Packham was very amusing and persistent as the *Beadseller*; and Ian Stone gave a fine Cap'n Birdseye cameo as *McNaught*.

The denouement was complicated and difficult to follow, but that was in the writing. It almost called for a series of flashbacks. Similarly, some of the early dialogue was a bit staccato and didn't introduce the characters sufficiently.

Nevertheless, it was a thoroughly enjoyable production, with a strong cast. The director, Barbara Hardy, and her team are to be congratulated. It's her first involvement with BODS; and I do hope that she will do more with them.

Thank you

Graham Botterill