

NATIONAL OPERATIC AND DRAMATIC ASSOCIATION

Society: **The Chameleons Amateur Dramatic Society**

Date: **22nd September 2006**

Production: **Play On**

Venue: **The Travellers Studio, Harrow Arts Centre**

Report by: **Harvey Kesselman**

Unfortunately I did not see the production given by this company in 1995, but I am sure it could not have been better than the performance we saw on Friday. It was without a doubt the best play I have seen this company do since I became a NODA representative. The pace was just right, there were no hiccups and the performances were terrific.

I always feel it rather unfair of certain authors who make rather a mockery of "amateur dramatics"; although one has to admit their plays are usually funny, not too cruel and, providing amateurs perform them seriously, they can be very amusing. This was certainly the case with this production. The idea of showing an amateur company in rehearsal of a new play, written by a local author, and the problems the cast have in remembering their lines certainly struck a chord with this reporter.

Laurence Hutchinson was very funny as Gerry Dunbar the 'director' of the play within the play 'Murder most Foul', playing his part rather like a fussy Russell Grant. He was ably assisted by **Helen Stevens** as Aggie Manville, his Stage Manager, who acted like most S.M's, rushing around, complaining that time was being wasted etc. She doubled up as the Stage Manager, prompt, responsible for the set design for the 'new play'. **Denis O'Brien** and **Janette Hutchinson** played the married couple, Henry and Polly Benish. Denis was wonderful as Lord Dudley looking terribly scared, wandering around with a very funny expression on his face which he managed to maintain throughout, causing a great deal of laughter. He was equally matched by Janette who gave lovely performance as Lady Margaret, giving the character a sort of elderly almost the lady dowager.

Marla "Smitty" Smith as Katherine Priest, played the maid, and was a little quiet on delivering her dialogue. I would have preferred a more stronger delivery as some of her lines were almost missed. As her experience on stage is, perhaps rather limited, one could forgive that, and next time she appears, I am sure her dialogue will be delivered in a much firmer voice. **Michelle Edwards** was super as both Violet Imbury and Diana Lassiter, occasionally forgetting her lines, but then coming up with them in the end. **Helen Downer** as Louise Peary, was well cast as a sort of a ASM responsible for Sound and Lighting and providing tea for the cast of 'Murder Most Foul' Then we have the author of this murder mystery – Phyllis Montegue – played with just the right attitude one would expect of an author (local to the area) whose ninth play (after one assumes 8 failures) was about to have a public showing for the first time. The only problem she caused was that she wanted to alter some of the script much to the annoyance of the director to say nothing of the cast. The part was brilliantly played by **Sally Crowley**.

There were, however two names that were missing in the biographical notes shown in the programme. Two actors of which there has to be said...

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I refer to two of the stalwarts of The Chameleons; **Stuart Everett** and **Robert Spolander**. Stuart was Saul Arthur Watson playing the part of Doctor Rex Forbes in love with Dianna Lassiter, who was really in love (not in the play) with Billy Carewe, who played Stephen Sellers in 'Murder Most Foul' (Sort that one out)!!

Stuart was very funny and rather pompous as the Doctor, who had a secret that was not divulged until the end of the play (no, I'm not going to give it away), and Robert was the hero of the piece. Both gave very strong performances and were excellent in their portrayals.

This was, as I said in my earlier paragraph, the most enjoyable play I have seen Chameleons perform. It ran very smoothly and their producing a programme with cast list, biographies etc. for 'Murder Most Foul' was very clever. Calling themselves P.A.N.T.S, (Pinner and Neasden Theatrical Company) was, I am sure a name that someone in the Chameleons came up with. As for the original name, I don't think I should mention what those initials spelled out.

Linda Everett is to be congratulated in directing a very witty play with excellent performances. She was helped by **Alex Forni** who doubled up as Assistant Director and Stage Manager. **Robert Spolander** was the Production Manager; lighting and sound were in the very capable hands of **John Jetten**; **Catherine Waters** was responsible for the properties; **Arlette Kamellard** seemed to have little to do as prompt (although because the way the script is written with various lines supposedly being forgotten by the cast, if Arlette was needed, one would never know); set construction, **Stuart Everett** and members of the company; front of house, **Geoffrey Coad**; costumes **Helen Stevens**.

A very satisfying evening, many congratulations to The **Chameleons**.