

Beaufort Players

“Night Must Fall”

24th - 26th March 2011

Watching this famous thriller, in a gratifyingly full Ascension hall, I found myself sitting by an elderly lady who told me her family had known the author, Emyln Williams, as a schoolboy in North Wales. She said he had always felt unappreciated, a fact which must have influenced him considerably when writing this menacingly vivid play.

Set in the isolated house of the elderly and (seemingly) wheelchair-bound Mrs. Bramson, it tells of her infatuation with Dan, a young pageboy at Tallboys, the local hotel (£1.50 a week plus tips!). When she takes him on as her personal assistant, we come to realise that his chirpiness covers up acute psychological problems and that he is in fact a crazed murderer/pyromaniac. Alan Robinson played him very convincingly, through all his moods from charming to creepy and then positively spine-chilling.

Jayne Bowman very successfully played the elderly Mrs. Bramson, adding lots of years to herself. The scene when she suddenly found herself alone in the house, her normal haughtiness replaced by sheer terror, was a real tour-de-force; the tension in the audience was palpable. Lisa Morris as her plain and lonely niece, Olivia, was a commendably strong presence throughout and Gemma Breakell, Kate Martin and June Burgess were all excellent as, respectively, the vulnerable young maid, the feisty housekeeper and the bouncy district nurse.

With so much gloom and doom around - especially as night gradually fell - following the discovery of a headless corpse, it was a relief to have some lighter touches provided by Russell Gillman as the “boring” Hubert, a pompous and splendidly moustached gentleman friend. And the stiff authority of Roger Dishley as the pinstriped police inspector also introduced some welcome moments of calm.

It would obviously be inappropriate for me to comment on my own very brief and unseen appearance as the Lord Chief Justice but otherwise I can confidently say that the cast, skilfully directed by Diana Dishley, worked very well together. Their lines were always clear and every move flowed naturally. Throughout they were supported by appropriately spooky music and deft sound effects, not least the frequent bangs of the off-stage front door. The 1930s furniture, props and dreary pictures also added to the quality of the production, as did the lighting and the period clothes and hairstyles. Congratulations to producer Jane Quill for coordinating everything so well.

As always, the front-of-house arrangements - box-office, posters, programme and refreshments - were of top standard. Indeed there’s no doubt that nowadays the Beaufort Players can be relied on to make their audiences feel really welcome and provide them with excellent entertainment.

John Harrison