

Sardines review:

Prescription For Murder

Norman Robbins

society/company: Beaufort Players Drama Group

performance date: 18 Jul 2018

venue: Church of the Ascension Hall, Ealing

reviewer/s: Andrea Richardson (Sardines review)



There was a small but select audience for this evening's production. The play's action takes place in the living room of Doctor Richard Forth and his wife, Barbara. Mrs Forth is continually ill with a series of

unidentifiable afflictions and Dr Forth seems to have a slightly shady, possibly suspicious past. A series of other characters arrive and depart the living room planting clues and generally misleading the audience. This is a traditional "whodunit" in a domestic setting. The oft used phrase "Let me make you a nice cup of tea" is usually a welcome offer, but in this play is one that it might be wise to turn down! There is a huge twist in the tale so don't believe everything you hear.

The first thing that struck this reviewer was the fabulous set when the curtains opened. The living room of the Devon house was beautifully dressed in great detail, so kudos to the Set Design team for an excellent effort.

The reliable and supportive char lady Dorothy Livingstone (played by Mary Hill) was an excellent piece of casting. Her accent appeared spot on and she was very good in character.

Vicky Prior as Barbara Forth did a very good job. This is a dialogue heavy play and she did very well.

Next we met the couple married slightly too long, Allan and Mary Haigh. These were beautifully played by Peter Coles and Jane Quill. They had a genuinely touching relationship borne of the long-term knowledge older couples have – overbearing Mary may have sniped at Allan but you could tell they adored each other and that came through in the performance. Both entertaining and subtle.

April Parker as the village 'scarlet woman' Julia Moore was suitably snooty and catty. She came across very well as the scorned ex.

Brandon Jacobs Brewer was making his stage debut as the slightly strange Eric Dawson, who arrives claiming a connection to Dr Forth's former fiancée. He did a fair job though he was clearly tense. He needs to relax a little more and focus on working with the actor he is acting with, but overall I look forward to seeing more from him.

Finally, Matthew Jay McCarthy was also making a stage debut at Beaufort Players as Dr Richard Forth. He took on this large role with relish and was appropriately uncaring and pompous. It would be good to slow his lines down sometimes as on a few occasions he blurted them very fast so they got missed.

There were no weak performances from this small cast. Some minor prompts were needed the night I attended. I felt the relationship between Dr Forth and Julia could have been far more flirty, needed "hotting up" to make it more believable.

Lighting was straightforward, and the set was well designed, so the actors fully utilised all the space. The melodramatic music before and after the acts was a nice eerie element to proceedings too. All the costumes and props were appropriate (one minor point: the clock was never moved forward in time as the days progressed; it's the little things that count).

This was a well-directed and efficiently executed production which I enjoyed very much. Well done to Director Krystyba Kobiak and Producer Ana Bretes, and to the whole cast and crew.

