

Poor production harms mystery

By R.S. LEIDER

review

The stage set seems right out of Clue, the board game.

Upon entering the Oakland University Studio Theatre in Varner Hall, one might imagine the current offering "Black Coffee" would be presented with all the excitement usually served up by the familiar Parker Bros. game.

Sadly, this Midwest premiere of Agatha Christie's 1930 mystery-comedy is as about as exciting as a round of the children's game of Chutes and Ladders.

The script is hardly arousing and not the least bit mind tinging. Only mystery of the entire evening is why was this play chosen to be performed, let alone be the Theatre Arts Program's entry in the American College Theatre Festival.

You may want to ask this question of yourself as the play continues on selected Thursday-Sunday blocks until Dec. 7. The main reason for seeing it would be to enjoy the performance of Peter McBryan as fabled detective Hercule Poirot.

McBRYAN ARRIVES on the scene as Poirot just after the great inventor and very unloved Sir Claud Amory is found dead on his country estate. Amory's coffee has been poisoned. There are clearly more suspects than mourners present.

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application of makeup on the university level.

The makeup bases are non-human colors, and the age lines are far too obvious and poorly placed even by beginning Crayola standards.

THE SCENERY, set pieces, props and lighting all are very respectable. The audience is clearly inside the library of a large old home 25 miles from London. James A. Hatfield and the student crew have done a superb job.

The director, Adeline Hirschfeld-Medalia, has given the talented student and faculty amateurs among the cast very little to do. Their characters are not fleshed out. They are not even cartoon versions of Christie well-knowns.



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