

Thrills keep audience on edge for 'Deathtrap'

The Birmingham Village Players production of Ira Levin's "Deathtrap" continues at 8:30 p.m. Friday-Saturday at the playhouse at Chestnut Street and Hunter Boulevard in Birmingham. For ticket information call 644-2075.

By Barbara Michals
Special writer

Deathtrap: a very dangerous place or set of circumstances. The Birmingham Village Players "Deathtrap" keeps the audience screaming and gasping as one surprise after another unfolds in the Ira Levin thriller.

"Deathtrap," which opens the 60th season of the Birmingham Village Players, is about the disease "thriller." Its malignancy — the obsessive pursuit of the perfect, one-act, five-character, two-act murder mystery. Would someone kill to match the acclaim of such a play? Emphatically yes, says Levin, for greed is the deadliest virus of all.

review

one-time successful Broadway mystery writer who has been down on his luck for many years. Tired of living off his wife's money, Bruhl toys with the idea of stealing the promising manuscript sent to him by one of his writing-seminar students.

His wife Myra (Lynne Martbey) is horrified at the ease with which Sidney talks of polishing off the play's young author, Clifford Anderson (Kim Cooke). From here the plot takes many serpentine turns as Sidney and student Clifford match wits repeatedly.

IN A CLEVER stroke, Levin prominently acknowledges his indebtedness to such modern murder classics as "Dial M for Murder" and "Sleuth," lest he be accused of a little plot-stealing himself.

Overmeyer does a marvelous job of capturing Bruhl's icy sophistication.

Beneath the glib one-liners is a desperate and diabolical man. When the going gets tough, though, Overmeyer lets a little of Bruhl's facade crumble to remind us that the character is still just an amateur at the murder game.

The players production has a tremendous sense of style and craftsmanship despite repeated line problems Saturday night that marred potentially great performances. At least four of the five-member cast were afflicted to some degree but made adept recoveries each time.

Martbey's Myra fidgets and whines just enough to make the plot developments credible. This is the first Myra I've seen who truly looks like she could be scared to death, both the Broadway and Hollywood versions of the

characters were too strong, heightening the element of surprise at the expense of plausibility.

Martbey also handles the sobbing quite well.

AS CLIFFORD, Cooke gives a strong portrayal of the cold-blooded opportunist behind the "pretty face." Aside from the lapses into line difficulties, both Overmeyer and Cooke have smooth, polished delivery styles. They are well-paired adversaries.

Ruth Seranian is very good as Helga Ten Dorp, the visiting Dutch psychic who keeps picking up bad vibes at the Bruhl home. She handles the accent adeptly and nicely underplays the comic aspects of the character, allowing Helga to be more useful for foreshadowing than for comic relief.

Comedy Club features duo

Fast and Massard, a musical duo, will be spotlighted on the "Comedy Club" series at 8 p.m. in J-306 at the Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community

College in Farmington Hills. For more information call the Office of Student Activities at 476-9400.

Jerry McKeon is adequate as Porter Milgrim, Sidney's lawyer, but not very effective in his final speeches.

The play's epilogue is a troublesome scene that has been tried various ways. The players version comes off more confusing than startling.

This production of "Deathtrap" has many strengths, though. Director

Carol Burton and assistant Diane McKeon have elicited some excellent characterizations from the cast. Dick Wagner's set design is exceedingly handsome. Debbie Ball's special effects for the storm work well, and Dana Quell-Clough's make-up committee keeps the blood flowing convincingly, even if it is an oily pale shade.

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