

Suspense builds smoothly in Troy Players 'Mousetrap'

Performances of the Troy Players production of "The Mousetrap" continue through Saturday, Nov. 18. For ticket information call 879-1285.

By Helen Zucker
staff writer

The world's longest continuously running play has come to Troy. Agatha Christie's "The Mousetrap" is the Troy Players' opening gambit of the season. Cleanly directed by Stephen Kiersey, the cast of eight who find themselves stranded in Monkswell Manor are a fair match for each other.

It's an even production, all of the actors doing their best to frighten each other — and the audience — and succeeding. The troupe builds to a nice pitch. The suspense mounts with each scene. Laurie Smith as Mollie Halston, the young wife who has decided to run Monkswell Manor as a guest house, is a cut above the rest of the cast. Smith has the most demanding role and she seems to be running on raw talent.

She's onstage during most of the play, and runs the gamut of emotions, from trust in the husband she wed a year ago after knowing him for three weeks, to thinking he is a murderer.

Robert Szatkowski is amusing as the young, spirited, Christopher Wren. Wren likes to sleep in rooms with four-poster beds, winds up cooking the guest meals (Mollie's meals sound dreadful), and seems to be the right age to be the suspect.

Szatkowski manages to bring poignancy to his role as a big dresser, a lonely boy hiding behind a great architect's name.



Helen Zucker

Angelo Valeri, dressed in an alarming black raincoat, white scarf and black hat (the clothes of the killer), turns in a fine performance as Giles Halston. As Mollie's husband, he gets to tote heavy bags, chop wood, worry about his wife's attachment to Wren and run up and down the stairs a lot. Valeri does all this with panache. He even manages to chew on his pipe and look guilty and irritated at the same time.

JILL SNOWDEN gives us a Mrs. Boyle who deserves what she gets. Mrs. Boyle wears a perpetual frown, believes a proper guest house should have a proper staff, but has done improper things during her tenure as a judge. It's hard to keep from applauding when Mrs. Boyle frowns her last frown.

Joe Urkhus as Major Metcalf is mysteriously perplexed and forever poking in the collars while he chomps on his pipe. Urkhus does a fine job as the baffled Major.

Philomena Somers, sans makeup, plays Miss Casewell. She skulks around in cords, boots, cardigan, a tie, the uniform of a London literary lesbian. Yet Miss Casewell lives in Majorca, doesn't write and has come to this deserted part of England on "mystery" business. Somers gives us a thoroughly shady Miss Casewell.

Guy Snyder as Mr. Paravicini, seems to have escaped from an Ital-

ian circus. His wild, unstopable laughter, his ability to pick out the scary theme song "Three Blind Mice" with one finger, and the coincidence of his Flis-Royce being stuck in a snow ditch coupled with the flimsy excuse that he's in this part of the country on a junket to a friend's house make Paravicini a prime suspect. Snyder wears makeup and bounds about like a boy, making him look guilty the moment we lay eyes on him.

Tim Mohan as Detective Sergeant Trotter rounds out the cast. Trotter is an eminently sane, British sort of detective. As Trotter, Mohan has his hair nicely cut, he carries around a notebook he has found, makes every- one reenact crimes, finds out telephone wires, the works.

Helen Zucker has many years' experience reviewing for newspapers and magazines in Michigan, New York and Massachusetts.

'Carousel' cast does well despite limitations of stage

Performances of the musical "Carousel," presented by the First Theater Guild of Birmingham, continue through Saturday, Nov. 11, at the First Presbyterian Church in Birmingham. For ticket information call 646-6033.

By Richard Marsh
special writer

First Theater Guild is undertaking a massive job with its current production, Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Carousel."

For its limited resources, the guild does a respectable job with the show, although much of the grandeur of Rodgers and Hammerstein's style is lost in the small Knox Auditorium of the First Presbyterian Church.

Dovering big shows like "Carousel" always has inherent problems, such as trying to retain the grand feeling of the show. Musically, the guild provides an excellent

review

show for the resources available. The small orchestra has a good sound to it and balances well with the singers, something many larger groups are unable to achieve.

Lead performers are good overall and have fine voices. Leading the cast is David Sikes as Billy Bigelow, Kell Maltch as Julie Jordan, John Picha as Enoch Snow and Laura Loud as Carrie Pipperidge.

Betsy Evans as Nettie Fowler has the most pivotal role as far as the music goes, leading "June Is Bustle! Out All Over" and singing "You'll Never Walk Alone." While this role basically calls for a highly trained low-alto voice, Evans makes the most of her higher-pitched voice to properly sing the part.

THE BARE-BONES set and props hamper the show somewhat, as it is hard to get into the right mood. For example, using just a simple park bench as a setting for a tree-lined path along the shore does not transmit the appropriate feeling. Granted, facilities limit what can be done, but this is what happens when shows like "Carousel" are down-sized.

Costumes are well done and add to the show. Some of the performers' makeup is overdone, however. When the makeup stands out from the back of the auditorium, there is way too much on.

"Carousel" does work well for the group in at least one other respect. It gives a large number of people, including lots of children, a chance to be on stage, the main reason for a small group attempting a show like this.

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