

CHELTENHAM OPERATIC & DRAMATIC SOCIETY

“HOUSE GUEST” Tuesday 26th September 2006

Mystery, intrigue, murders and more twists than spaghetti junction held the audience's attention in the C.O.D.S. production of Francis Durbridge's 'House Guest'. The story of a film star's only child being kidnapped and the subsequent course of events, created a compelling evenings theatre.

The superb set was beautifully dressed with style and elegance. I particularly liked the attention paid to small detail. For example, the film star's photographs hung in the hallway. The lighting was well planned and in keeping with the room. The sound effects were right on cue and at the correct level of volume to be 'realistic', (something often not taken into consideration). The costumes were suitably chosen. However, inappropriate shoes can draw the eye! The strong, well-balanced cast delivered the dialogue smoothly, and more importantly, clearly. James Lloyd-Lee's contrast between Robert Drury and his double, Philip Henderson, was superb. This talented actor really had me questioning whether it was the same person. Cathy Tyler also gave a beautifully controlled portrayal as his frantic wife, Stella. The pace and tension of the action was maintained throughout by a totally convincing cast, and held our interest until the very end. Director, Nick Smee, and C.O.D.S. are to be congratulated on a polished production.

Robert Drury/Philip Henderson – An excellent portrayal. Dialogue was very naturally delivered. Well held accent as Henderson. Very believable.

Stella Drury – As I said before, beautifully controlled. Hysterics can so easily be 'over the top', but certainly not so in this case. Her maternal instincts came over very well.

Jane Mercer – A nice balance between efficient employee and 'friend of the family' was shown. A difficult role to deliver in contrast to the other complex characters. Well done.

Vivien Norwood – This actress knows how to use her face to get her point over. A good characterisation.

Crozier – A short-lived appearance, but a well-defined performance. Gently menacing without being thuggish. We understood that this crook enjoyed good living.

Dorothy Medway – Cameo roles are a very integral part of the plot, and can so easily be shadowed by the main characters. This role was handled well, with the actress putting her own mark on it.

Inspector Burford – It was crystal clear that this character was used to getting what he wanted. A strong performance.

Sergeant Clayton – The scowl perfected. Suitably aggressive with a chip on his shoulder. A well thought out and consistent performance.

Report given by the NODA South West Regional Representative – Malcolm White.