

"SLEEP NO MORE"

'Sleep No More' was certainly an evening of spooky happenings, performed by a strong cast.

The fact that the action took place in an old theatre lent itself well to performing using 'blacks', with extremely good lighting, which added excitement and eeriness, along with both a disturbing and sinister atmosphere when needed.

As usual with an Alistair Brown production, the technical side was as well-developed as the performances, with well-researched music that both created and added to the mood. The single spots were very well-placed, both on the stage and on the actors, so that certain planes of their faces were highlighted, increasing the ghostly feel.

There were a number of shocks – e.g. the entrances from the back of the auditorium – which took me completely by surprise each time, and the firing of the gun, as although you expect it, it is still a shock when it happens.

The end of Act 1 with the vision of a girl hanging by her neck was very disturbing. I also liked the part where the sound appeared to be bouncing off the walls, very eerie.

For me, Jodie O'Loughlin as Eva – the evil ghost of the theatre, who hanged herself when only 10 years old, created the real and palpable spectre of the malevolent young girl, forced to live forever in the theatre, because her brother would not forgive her for causing his life to change because his parents blamed him – but did not realise how Eva had spurred him on to assist her, with the accident occurring when he was called away. Jodie was quite chilling in her portrayal and I am sure she has already learnt so much from this experience, and will continue to learn as she does more, which I hope she will.

Ralph Gough, as the brother William, now an old man, gave us the wavery feel of his age, combined with an inner strength that he was not going to forgive Eva and release her from her haunting.

I was impressed by Paul Rogers as Micky – William's son, who knew nothing about Eva, and wanted to put on a play in his family theatre, a play that had not been performed originally because of Eva's death. Paul really got the feel of the Director, in fact he was how I would imagine Alistair to be – dedicated, forceful, sometimes abrupt and often irate if the actors wouldn't give him what he wanted – but also generous to the younger actor, and full of praise for an accomplished job! Well done Paul – a very believable character, and certainly a big step up in your acting skills.

Mathew Rowlands as Ben, the other young actor, (who Eva tried to get to hang himself, so that she'd have someone to play with), has done a few things with the Rep, and is an accomplished performer – he did very well, and we could see him change from a carefree lad to a worried and fretful boy, held under Eva's spell.

Jenna Kay played the young ASM, Sal, in love with the lead actor, but pushed into the background when he discovers that the lead actress is an old lover, and in fact Ben is his son. Jenna gave a very good performance as the harassed and disappointed young lady, who had been pitched into the theatrical world more by default than desire, and found that juggling a small part, plus props and anything else the Director

required, was indeed a very steep learning curve, all of which was evident in her portrayal.

Tracey Chatterley played Jenny, Ben's mother, and one time lover of Pete, played by Alex Brewer. The couple got some good tensions into their relationship, but I somehow wanted a little more passion from them both, and particularly Alex, as the reality of their position took hold. It was all a little too controlled for my liking. There was more contrast and dimension that could have been achieved. However, Tracey gave us a very good representation of an actress coming back to the stage after bringing up her son, and she has a slightly husky tone to her voice, which created interest, and there was good expression.

Alex is finding himself at the Rep, and gets better with every performance, but just a little more passion please to bring up the level of execution, and make us believe totally in the arrogant and forceful young man. I would also have liked a bit more projection as when for example Sal said "Shh, we'll be overheard" – Pete was speaking very quietly, so it didn't ring true.

It was a chilling tale – technically inspired, and the cast interacted well, giving some diverse and fine performances, particularly may I say from the youngsters, who were both superlative. I heard several members of the audience, obviously those of a more nervous disposition, who commented that they would not like Eva in their house to sleep – so the ambience and idea of the play did its job.

I thought the bows completed the production well – they retained the supernatural feel of the production, and no-one relaxed into smiles etc – so the spell wasn't broken.

The Rep, under the guidance of Alistair Brown, with his attention to detail and insightfulness, has once again given their audience a thought-provoking and eerie evening, which was most watchable, and a challenging evening's entertainment.

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