

THE HOLLOW

An enjoyable evening's theatre, with a good cast.

The set was excellent – it had a number of surprises, which as always were attention to detail that the Rep does so well. The breakfast nook was well-conceived, giving a separate dimension to the room, whilst a simple thing like the baronial arms on the downstage left door reveal lent reality, as did the glow from the fireplace when the fire was lit – small things but all brought the set to life, and make it a good backdrop to the action.

The lighting was subtle – the gentle lowering of the lights to signify the passing of time was almost imperceptible, but there nonetheless.

I liked the way the Director kept the cast moving around the set, making use of every aspect, but it all seemed quite natural and not contrived.

Costumes were good, they were restrained but in keeping with the era, I particularly liked Lucy's suit for the inquest, it was exactly right for her, but so wrong for an inquest – great! A small point – Inspector Colquhoun's trousers were very badly taken up – they looked entirely out of place, and Edward's dress suit trousers were too long, and his light suit would have looked better without the jacket done up and his shirt sticking out from the back vent!! Otherwise everything looked totally suitable.

It was good to see Roger Scales back on stage, he gave Henry a nice character, although I would have liked a little more deliberation at times, but the care he gave the rest of the family shone through.

Rona Cracknell gave us a wonderful performance as the rather vague Lucy – such grace and a certain gentle imperiousness – plus some very funny lines. I loved the way Rona foreshortened the word 'very', adding yet another quirk to her character traits.

Henrietta as played by Christine Hobart, was a strong and fairly straight forward character, compared with the other family members, even though she too had her secrets!

Dave Hillman had exactly the right feel for Gudgeon the butler, very dry but always one step ahead of the family to make sure things were just right for them, and dominant with the housemaid Doris, who was nicely played by Hayley Vaughan.

Joe Hawkins got the feel of the ineffective Edward well – with his slightly menacing asides, which called his character into doubt – I must admit I thought he was possibly the murderer.

I thought Chris Lane was very suited to the part of Doctor Cristow – seemingly caring for his patients, but not caring of his wife in the number of affairs he seemed to have had, which was the catalyst for his murder.

Julie Hanns created the complex character of Gerda Cristow very well – completely misleading as the downtrodden wife, her sudden turn to vindictiveness was excellent, and explained many things!

Jenny McDonald was the young Midge, another complex character well portrayed.

The police presence of Adam Croft as Inspector Colquhoun and Adam Butcher as DS Penny gave another dimension to the play, with Adam Croft the serious detective who weighed up all the evidence, saw certain nuances within the evidence, and Adam Butcher as the young DS, who has his own way of getting information, particularly from the young, pretty housemaid! A good pairing.

The final cast member was Sarah Payne as the very up front film star Veronica Craye, yet another conquest of the very active Doctor!! A nice part to play, and Sarah made the most of it.

I felt everything worked well and enjoyed the classy ambience of the production, the music also tied in well with the feel of the piece.

It was good to know that a number of nights were sell outs, no mean feat in this day and age, but testament to the quality of production from the Rep. All in all a charming and testing evening – keeping the brain active in trying to ascertain who the murderer was.

Nova Horley