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Tonight's NODA trip was to the Bispham Castaways production of Brutal Biology which was written by their very own Susan Hope. This was a murder mystery play with some comedy and some very dark parts. Directed by Sam Bolton and Helen Findlay who both did a fantastic job with a new script and did very well to create the "whodunnit" aspect of the show. Hats off to Susan for writing the script which in general moved at pace apart from a couple of scenes, although this may be down to some memory issues of lines but the script writing was very good. There was a good mix of thriller and comedy in this play. The directors Sam and Helen did well to keep the suspense going throughout the whole evening through all 3 Acts. The cast were able to keep the question of who done it all the way through the evening alive.

There was some great character acting in this play. I would like to mention Susan Hope, the play writer, who was also acting as Professor Megan Mulch and she did a great job with strong projection and a lovely character throughout, again showing her versatility with comedy and with drama. Luke Foley who played Professor Philip Parrot had a very big dramatic character and an epic death scene. The feisty Fiona Filch, played by Wilson Midgley, kept characters guessing whether she was actually the killer throughout the night - she was quick to anger and took no prisoners. Martin Thompson who played Dr Lucas Lothario, as his name suggests was a little bit of a ladies man and managed to sleep his way through all of the female cast at one point or another in this play, very natural character but a little quiet at times with his delivery. Shannon Poleon as Director Deirdre Drear did very well with her character, she came across gentle and accessible and her delivery was clear - well done. Hayley Price played the character Daisy Duck with her love interest David McChrystal as Alex Art gave great performances, nice and clear in the projections and believable with the chemistry and their character traits held throughout the whole show - good job. Katie Ashworth, who played Dr Rosie Rich, unfortunately died in the first act very early on but her character was good and her lines were clear. I'd like to mention Sharon Sinclair as Madam Spirit Stearns, her character was funny, very accessible and a real crowd favourite with her - talking to the Captain and her clairvoyance. Whenever she entered the stage, you knew something funny was about to happen - it was a shame to see her shot in the third act. Angela Crossley who played Professor Olive Ordure had a very interesting part in Act One which meant she stayed on the sofa asleep for most of it as she was unconscious. The Second Act she came to life a little bit more but was then locked in the kitchen, she did however manage to have a couple of scenes where she was able to deliver some lines and she attempted these very well and clearly enjoys comedy performances, unfortunately there were a couple of insecure lines which maybe held up the pace of the script a little. That just leaves the murderer Betsy Swale played by Siân Conroy. Although a couple of tables were able to guess who was the murderer she did a great job of appearing as naive and innocent throughout the whole play, her character was lovely and engaging and her lines were clear, her characterisation of Betsy was really enjoyable to watch - good job.

This is a small but very enthusiastic theatre company who provided something a little different for amateur dramatics tonight. The play was great, but it was supported by a hotpot supper and apple pie and cream in between the Three Acts. As well as a mystery quiz and also a grand prize for the winning table, it was a very enjoyable and sociable evening.

Technically, the show was simple but effective. The lighting had some lovely effects with the storm.....this ran throughout the whole of the play with the lightning and thunder. The scene lighting was simple, but did exactly what it needed to and there were some clever usage of torches when the power went out. There were a couple of sound gremlins unfortunately with the speakers on stage but these were overcome and the cast managed well to carry on. David McChrystal also dealt very well with the car alarm going off outside the venue in one of his more dramatic scenes and it didn't shake the performances with the actors staying on course - well done.

Director Sam Bolton and Helen Findlay did a great job with this script and with a crowded stage space when all the actors were on there, it was very difficult to keep it fluid but they did a great job with trying to keep the dynamics on stage and the movement throughout the piece. There were a couple of moments of delivery being upstage which was difficult to hear the lines and also a couple of blocking issues but this is a one night play, so this was their first and last night performance and I think the performance was handled very well with a small stage and quite a large cast.

I was met warmly when I arrived by Debbie Flavell, who has been my point of contact for the theatre company and the hospitality was lovely. The whole evening was ably hosted by John Flavell on the microphone who gave clear instruction with what was happening throughout the evening and it all went swimmingly. There has to be a mention as well to the fantastic catering from Alison and Martin at the Carousel Diner who provided the hotpot supper and apple pie and cream for the audience. There was not a single full plate left, everybody enjoyed it immensely. What a fantastic evening. Thank you very much for your invitation and I look forward to the next production.