

The Cemetery Club by Ivan Menchell
NOMADS (Newmarket Operatic, Musical & Dramatic Society)
Kings Theatre, Newmarket
Director Marion Hadley

The latest offering from NOMADS was Ivan Menchell's play "The Cemetery Club". The clever script is full of one liners and barbed comments, there are lots of laughs as well as some very poignant moments. The story follows three Jewish widows, from Queens, New York, friends for years, who once a month get together on a Sunday for tea before going to the cemetery to visit their husbands' graves. However they are very different characters, each coping with their loss in their own way.

Technically this play is challenging as two settings are needed Ida's home where they all meet and the Cemetery. John and Marion Hadley's set design, particularly for Ida's apartment was excellent well furnished and, except for the bureau on the fore stage, well used. The cemetery brought its own problems as, of necessity, has to be completely separate from the main setting. Scene changes were done as swiftly as the movement of large pieces of furniture across the curtain line allowed. Lighting was good with three spotlights used for the different graves in the cemetery. Sound effects were fine and with one exception well cued. Costumes suited the characters although maybe Doris, being the more traditional of the three, would have worn a skirt rather than pants, but that's just by the way.

Director Marion Hadley and her cast definitely understood the dynamic between these three rather disparate friends which ensured the friendship they enjoyed was believable.

Anita Marshall's Ida came across as dependable, acting as peacemaker between her bickering friends. She still feels the loss of her husband Murray but would like to move on with her life and that came across well.

In contrast there is Fiona Maguire's Lucille, who is brash, funny and flirts with any man she comes into contact with, however, there is a sense that her behaviour hides the fact that she is lonely. Lucille has some very funny lines which Fiona delivered exceedingly well and the beautifully handled hangover was incredibly believable!

The third member of the trio is Doris who is a traditionalist, very stoic but clings to the past and to her husband Abe's memory. Kate Nolan produced a well characterised performance as Doris depicting well someone never likely to come to terms with her loss.

These three talented actors each produced very different well defined characters that gelled together excellently and all managed, in the main, to keep the American accents well. First night nerves necessitated the occasional prompt in places but overall the pace which was very important to the success of the play was good. They were supported and complemented by Chris Brighty who fitted in very well as Sam. His growing relationship with Ida was well shown and there was a neat cameo role from Sarah Smith who completed the cast as Mildred.

This was a nicely directed ensemble piece where the actors worked together as a team, bringing out the humour of this lovely script well. Thank you for a most enjoyable evening.

Julie Petrucci
Regional Representative NODA East District 4 South

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