

Huntingdon Drama Club: "Pack of Lies" by Hugh Whitmore
Director: Dean Laccohee
Producer: Phil Green
Stage Manager: Peter Welsh
Sound & Lighting: Mel Pugsley

Performed at Huntingdon commemoration Hall on Friday 11th November 2011

The Front of House team lead by Tony Burrin, were friendly and efficient. As we took our seats a sound track accompanied the opening of the house tabs to reveal a box set that was well constructed and decorated with a bleed through hallway and exits to kitchen and upstairs rooms. The exits could have been given more realism if the decoration had been carried on beyond the doors themselves. The upstage window, although backlit, needed some sort of street scene rather than just a light blue screen. The furniture was incongruous with the middle class family it was supposed to represent. The costumes by Ann Monk and Kelly Mason were well considered and on the whole worked quite well, as did hair and makeup by Kirsty Pickering.

The lighting by Mel Pugsley was well designed and operated, with effective specials and good wash's.

How well do we think we know our neighbours, this is the question that Hugh Whitmore's play about deception and communism asks. More pertinent in post war Britain than it is perhaps today, where we have a less social interactive relationship with our neighbours, but still thought provoking. Dean Laccohee's direction was thoughtful with just the right amount of tension and angst to keep you guessing. The cast started quite cautiously but quickly relaxed and eased into their parts. Ann Monk and Michael Black as

Barbara and Bob Jackson were the suburban couple whose neighbours integrity is called to question by MI5 operatives. Ann and Michael were believable in their parts as loving parents of their teenage daughter Julie, played very well by Jenny Bingham. They descend into depression and begin to bicker as their contented world is torn apart when they receive a phone call from the authorities. I didn't have a problem with an older couple having a teenage daughter but found it quite distracting in the final scene, when Bob recounts the preceding eight years, which meant that they were in their early forties when the events occurred, perhaps this reference could have been altered by the Director. Kelly Mason was outstanding as Helen Kroger, well complimented by Ronald Stevenson as her husband Peter. Scott Hutchinson was excellent as the MI5 officer Mr. Stewart, a man obsessed with his work and the protection and safety of his country. Scott's pauses and light heartedly disguised probing questions were a joy to watch, but also made you feel sorry for the innocent Jackson's. However on two occasions Stewart pretended to light and smoke a cigarette, and then deposit the obviously unsmoked cigarette in an ashtray. If the theatre will not allow smoking on stage I would recommend an electronic cigarette, at least that would give the illusion of exhaled smoke. Jane Crittenden as Thelma and Emma Hill, making her stage debut as Sally, were light relief as the MI5 stakeout operatives. The whole cast performed with excellent diction and projection.

Don McKay
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