

Spot the killer

Whodunnit? The judge dunnit, that's who. But among the unlikely collection of victim/suspects that make up the cast of Agatha Christie's 'Ten Little Niggers' any one of them could have emerged as the murderer. And that is what makes this play so remarkably dull. There is so little logic employed, so little skilful use of dialogue to guide the guesser; all ten little niggers can only start at short odds as the villain in this rather silly game of spot-the-homicidal-maniac.

And when the judge resurrects himself from the dead to unmask as the killer it is only a let down that the answer to the riddle is as simple as that. Not even a double twist in the tail to fire a spark before the curtain falls on this unmemorable two hours of red herrings.

Neither is 'Ten Little Niggers' (sounds like the title of a National Front leaflet, doesn't it) the sort of work where any one production could be much more impressive than the next. The worthy Dame Agatha has never claimed a reputation as a writer of dialogue, so the play relies entirely on a plot imaginative enough to keep the action rolling. Alas, 'Ten Little Niggers' is as weak in that department as it is on dialogue, and the only possible way to handle material like this is to send it up for an irreverent laugh.

The Huntingdon Drama Club production at the Commemoration Hall last week chose to play it straight, and if the cast had worked as hard on a more rewarding script as they had on this one, the result would in turn have been more rewarding. In short Huntingdon's 'Ten Little Niggers' was an indifferent evening's entertainment.

To be fair, the pace of action did perk up quite a bit in the second half when the stage was less congested with little niggers, and there was a general buzz around the audience as people whispered among themselves about suspects. Costumes were noticeably well chosen and the stage set was certainly adequate, but these are not things

Huntingdon Drama Club's 'Ten Little Niggers', presented at the Commemoration Hall, reviewed by Chris Dunn.

which make a production. The complete absence of nitty-gritty in the script and plot was insuperable.

For that reason also it is not possible to disseminate individual performances. Each character is so rigidly and predictably written that the cast haven't a chance. The interaction on stage reflected this rigidity perfectly, with everyone making mechanical gestures and milling about like clockwork skittles—not so much the fault of the players as the fault of the play.

'Ten Little Niggers' is as outdated as its title. Time to let it rest in peace I think.

Tribute to queen of whodunit

DAME Agatha Christie, doyenne of the whodunit, died aged 86 earlier this year, and Huntingdon Drama Club is reviving one of her most famous plays as a tribute to her.

'Ten Little Niggers' which recently re-appeared in a new film version (re-titled 'And Then There Were None') is a superior example of her work.

It is constructed with diabolical ingenuity, and contains three amazing plot twists; it demands sharp characterisations to overcome a stagey situation.

It is not so much a whodunit as a who's-doing-it. Ten strangers are inveigled to spend a weekend at a

Ten Little Niggers, Commemoration Hall, Huntingdon, reviewed by Deryck Harvey.

house on an island off the Devon coast.

No sooner have they become acquainted than, one by one, they are murdered, roughly according to the legend of the nursery rhyme, 'Ten Little Niggers,' which is hanging on the wall.

The catch is that as the 10 people dwindle in numbers, no-one can trust anybody else, for it becomes obvious that the murderer is in their midst.

Ted Sandy's production is populated by variously experienced actors, though it's not necessarily true that the least experienced are bumped off first!

... and then there were two

Mary Barnard stopped the show while making her debut for Huntingdon Drama Club at the Commemoration Hall last night — but not in the way she would have chosen.

She fainted just as the second act of Agatha Christie's 'Ten Little Niggers' opened, failed to make an entrance, and left two fellow actors stranded on stage.

Jack Hyde and David Mason ad libbed as best they could, and then found their way off stage.

The audience could be forgiven for wondering what kind of surprise thriller-writer Dame Agatha now had in store for them—but then the curtains were drawn.

After a few minutes, Miss

Barnard recovered and the play, in the best of show business traditions, went on.

Mr. Hyde stepped forward at the end of the performance and described her as a real trouper.

Miss Barnard had more than justified an extra round of applause.

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