

ENTERTAINMENT



"Death Trap" is mediocre

By ANN PAWLIKOWSKI

"Deathtrap" at Monahan's Dinner Theatre is intended to be a thriller and thanks to Ira Levin's script it surprises but with no thanks to the direction: it does not thrill.

To avoid revealing the surprises, it suffices to say that "Deathtrap" concerns a man who desperately needs money, love and another Broadway hit.

He is thriller-playwright, Sidney Bruhl — a man with two great talents: writing and planning murders. He is also a man experiencing writer's block, so the only alternative approach to his problems is (what else) — murder!

Such an action brings about a provocative idea: an author's turning of his fiction into reality. This idea is also the job of "Deathtrap's" director.

However, believability seems to be strangely held back in this production.

Particularly thin and laborious is the first act in which the actors seem to have been held back from playing off each other. This seems all too much for Jane Boswell (Myra Bruhl) whose instincts especially make her try to communicate with the other actors.

But no connection comes about; it's as if they were all speaking monotone monologues. Only in the comic parts does the natural animation of each of the actors show up.

In fact, the character of Helga Ten Dorp, a Dutch psychic, literally bounces all over the stage. Actress Kathryn MacDonald delivers a funny, if slightly inaccurate performance (her Dutch accent rolls into Russian, now and again).

In the second act, Lawrence Mahusky (Porter Milgrim) provides comic relief in his tight performance of a huffy but highly deductive lawyer.



Carl Van Esch (as Sidney Bruhl) puts the heat on Stephen Webb (as Clifford Anderson).

Carl Van Esch (Sidney Bruhl) and Stephen Webb (Clifford Anderson) show the proper distance and suspicion attributed to professional jealousy.

But no build-up of tension is apparent up to their fierce, angry confrontation. Then Van Esch and Webb.

face each other, ignite and raze the stage!

But until that point something is uniformly held back in the actors.

A deathtrap, by definition, holds something in its clutches.

It's a pity this "Deathtrap" holds captive its actors rather than its audience.

Photo by Ann Pawlikowski