

The imaginary daughter was delightfully portrayed by Sarah Uttley with natural charm, light, easy movements and a glistening expression. I liked the use of white clothing for these characters, which suggested their ethereal quality.

One of the outstanding performances of this production came from Fran Osborne as Muriel, the very dull pitiful 'in-law', She gave a beautiful characterisation sustained throughout, which could very easily have gone over the top, but never did.

Bob Cleeve succeeded in the role of the family friend, an ordinary character, but well delivered and warmly presented.

The main character, who is on stage throughout the play is Susan, the slowly deterioration middle-aged psychopath. Not only is this a huge part to cope with, but it calls for all manner of emotions and is very demanding role indeed.

It was exceedingly well performed by Dorothy Cushing who portrayed all the facets of the character, bringing out the humour as well as the pathos and dejection.

It was nice to see pleasant and attractive young men on stage in the shape of Richard Bennett and David Leadbeather, both of who established their characters. I would have like just a little more forcefulness in their performances.

The newly-installed, improved sound system added to the atmosphere of the play, which proved to be an excellent evening's entertainment.

Very well done, Mel Scolah and all your team

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EXTRAVAGANT HUMOUR TO SIT BACK AND ENJOY

For its spring production, Stage Two Downham chose to present 'Move over, Mrs Markham' by Ray Cooney and John Chapman, who have been churning out plays of this type for many years.

This one is now quite old, having been first performed in 1969, but still plays well and on the whole, audiences love it.

Billed as a comedy, it would be more correct to call it farce, however, because of its extravagant humour and ridiculous situations. Farce, being the most difficult medium to portray on stage, can fail miserably if not played at a cracking pace with fine pointing of witty dialogue. There was not problem on this occasion. The pace was fast and furious, with the funny lines, crisply delivered, and the audience lapped it up.

I defy anyone to unravel the plot! Having seen the play many times, I have tried, but after about half-an-hour of total improbability, it is usually simpler to give up, sit back and enjoy it if you can - and I certainly could and did with this production.

As usual in farce, there are numerous doors and characters popping in and out of the wrong one, which is no easy feat on a stage as small as that in Downham's Village Hall. However, the limitations were overcome by the use of alcoves, closets with self-sliders, the minimum of doors and a raised acting level.

The composite set was extremely attractive. In fact, the whole effect was very pleasing on the eye, as were the actors, who were beautifully dressed (or undressed!) at all times, for the play is full of sexual connotations and innuendo, but is really a harmless romp.

It was a team effort, very well cast, with no serious weaknesses. As such, it would be difficult to single out any performance.

The main characters of Mr and Mrs Markham were played by Bob Cleeve and Lesley Knight, the latter being on stage almost throughout the play, and the erring couple of Mr and Mrs Hodge by David King and Judy Pengelly. The plum part of the interior designer with effeminate tendencies was well handled by Brian Haworth, with going 'over the top'. In addition, four delightful cameo parts were played by Barbara Price as the 'Doggie' lady, Stella Barnes as yet another stripper, Rachel Scholes as a gorgeous maid and Mel Scorah as the hopeful loves. The play was directed by Dorothy Cushing.

It was a good night's entertainment. Both the actors and the audience enjoyed themselves. What more can one ask!

Barbara Taylor