

"All Because Of Agatha" review

Quad City Times – September 11, 2002 - by Ruby Nancy

If you're looking for a silly diversion this weekend, the comedy "All Because of **Agatha**" might be just the thing.

It's not great literature or anything, but the goofy, overdone nature of this show will keep audiences laughing for sure. Here's the setup: a young married couple buy a haunted house and hire a maid-cook from Brooklyn, then plan a party for the one night of the year that the ghost (a murdered witch) is reputed to show up. The assembled guests include a man-chasing Californian, an elderly neighbor who thinks she's a medium, and a sardonic reporter.

Got that?

Like I said, it's silly, but some cute performances are lots of fun. Don Faust and Ann Morman are having fun as the new homeowners, Duff and Joan O'Hara. He's amorous but henpecked, and she's as ditzzy as they come, and they play off each other so well that you'll never think of the word "statistics" in quite the same way again.

Though the show starts off a little slowly, Andy Davis' finely-nuanced work as a real estate agent isn't the reason at all. He's only in one scene, but make sure you watch his face during it — or you'll miss the only subtle comedic work to be found here.

Heidi Hamer's work in the title role is lots of fun. An actor who isn't afraid to look ridiculous, she goes all the way over the top in this show — strutting around in first a Cher-reminiscent fright wig and then a small sequined dress. She gets the benefit of some neat light and sound effects, too, and has to be having a great time here.

Dawn Rena Rapp is sullen and spunky as the cook, spouting some really great lines, and Bill Hudson's mama's-boy obstetrician will make you snicker. Carol Neuleib is having fun as the man-hungry blond who wants her next husband to be a doctor, and Diane Greenwood turns in an over-the-top performance as the hopelessly dramatic, bad-Latin-spouting "Madam La Solda" that her fans will certainly love.

As Flip Canon, the skeptical tabloid reporter, Andy Lord gets some of the best material in the show, and his sotto voce delivery of many asides is really the most sidesplitting thing about this crazy show. And when a spell turns him into a romantic lover, his sweetly sincere line delivery there is also a hoot.

Fine costumes, especially the evening wear, add bright color and some polish to the silliness, and the simple set (though perhaps painted in a way that is a bit too cutesy for the haunted part of Salem) takes a back seat to what the actors are doing here — making you laugh.

Even references to Van Gogh and Cleopatra can't make this show come close to highbrow, but that doesn't matter in a show like this. "**Agatha**" is doubtless a comic hit