

REPERTORY THEATRE

Good Presentation of "Mrs. Moonlight"

Private Performance

THE CAST.

Tom Moonlight	Jum Pendleton.
Minnie	Hattie Clarke.
Edith Jones	Kathleen Radford.
Sarah Moonlight	Patricia Trace.
Percy Middling	Tom Stephens.
Jane Moonlight	Elaine Smith.
Willie Rags	Jack Reading.
Peter	Gregory Hull.

THE Brisbane Repertory Theatre Society in selecting "Mrs. Moonlight," a play by Benn A. Levy, for production at Cremorne Theatre, ran its head into a number of difficulties, the most material of which was the apparently small matter of performing rights, which at the last minute prevented the production from being open to the general public. The performance was necessarily reserved for members only.

But there were other difficulties too, and it is more than likely that the producer, Mr. Royston Marcus, has been uncomfortably conscious of these. The play calls for the exercise of more than the usual degree of imaginative insight by the audience and it was the producer's task to see that the audience was fully acquainted with the purely internal mechanism by which this play becomes such a vital and arresting piece.

The play throughout was handled very capably by nearly everyone concerned. As usual there were one or two weak links, which just brought the production down to a level below the very best of the Repertory standard. It is always interesting to observe the resources of the experienced player thrown into sharp relief by the ineptitudes of the rank amateur. For that reason the performance of Mr. Jum Pendleton was such that before long we began to look upon him as a kind of artistic Bank of England. He seemed to cast a halo of competence and reliability around and about him when he was before the footlights, and more than once during the evening helped younger members through difficult situations. His characterisation of Mr. Moonlight was a deeply sensitive performance.

In Miss Patricia Trace the society appears to have found a player capable of great things. Her Mrs. Moonlight, too, almost matched that of Mr. Pendleton in

almost matched that of Mr. Pendleton in its felicity of treatment. She showed real sense of atmosphere in her uncanny ability to capture the feeling of the unreal that enshrouds the part in the last act. Yet in this last act there appears to have been an error of judgment on the part of the producer in not playing the concluding section at a slightly faster tempo. It is not good that an audience should see the end coming and have to sit patiently and wait for it. Nevertheless, it is was in this last act that this player capped the whole performance with acting of a very convincing character.

There were other points about this last act which suggests that the production could have been better. It is true that here, perhaps more than elsewhere in the play the value of silence as a dramatic weapon was fully realised by both playwright and producer. But while the two aged characters took charge of the action, and sensational happenings were going on up stage, it seemed strange that the remaining people in the room should retire backstage and take up statuesque anchorage at prescribed points. They must have been sorely puzzled by and certainly extremely interested in what was going forward, but at least two of the menfolk stood to attention as if they were waiters ready for action in case whisky and soda was indicated. Perhaps this is an instance where the habit of producers in draping their characters round the stage in a symmetric pattern should at least have been modified. It seemed too that Mr. Willie Ragg's efforts to cajole Mr. Middling into a bad investment were too prolonged and beside the point. However, the presentation of this last act was carried through by Mr. and Mrs. Moonlight with rare skill and judgment.

Another point at which we may cavil is that the art of make-up was sorely neglected in this last act. Mr. Jack Reading, as Willie Ragg, at the ripe age of 50 odd, looked as young and as sprightly as he did 32 years earlier. Jane Moonlight also seemed to have emulated her mother in her defiance of time's ravages.

Mr. Tom Stephens gave us his best work to date in his presentation of the obtuse Mr. Middling, especially in the courtship scene where his clumsy approach to a very delicate situation was delightfully achieved. Miss Hattie Clarke, in spite of Scotch to which slightly too much water had been added, built up and maintained a very high standard of performance as Minnie, the old retainer, whose sharp tongue never allowed a situation to escape her cutting observations. She made excellent use of some excellent lines, although one could imagine that many of these were lost on the people at the back of the theatre.

Miss Elaine Smith did very well for a newcomer, but spoiled her work by too much posturing when she was not speaking, and by allowing facial mannerisms to take

much posturing when she was not speaking, and by allowing facial mannerisms to take charge of her characterisation. Mr. Reading played his part with fitting breeziness, although in the later scenes he never appeared to modify his action to suit changed conditions. Another excellent piece of characterisation was that of Miss Kathleen Radford, who achieved a quiet dignity in all that she did. Last but not least was Mr. Gregory Hull, an Adonis whose diction and general deportment make one anticipate some good work from him in the future.

For the production this evening we suggest one alteration in the stage properties. And that concerns a model 1933 hat box, initialled P.T., which Mrs. Moonlight took with her when she left her home in the year of our Lord 1881. We might have been spared the initials.

A.H.T.