

## Bartholomew Players 24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Von Ribbentrop's Watch by Laurence Marks & Maurice Gran

Its amazing the complications and family rifts that an inanimate object can cause, as happened in the Roth household. The 'watch' was left to Gerald Roth, whose business is failing. Upon its return from the repairers, an inscription was found inside showing it belonged to **Joachim Von Ribbentrop**, one of Hitler's henchmen and was inscribed with a swastika. This increased the interest of the watch considerably and was referred to Sotheby's for a valuation. Normally, this wouldn't cause a problem, but in the Roth's devout Jewish household this was absolutely terrible.

Gerald (John Casey) was commanding as head of the family, with a good sense of timing (with some unfortunate ad-libs) and panicked when maintaining the defence of his actions with the watch to the rest of the family, lurching from one crisis to the next, Mr Blackburn, (*Ed Miller*) the watch repairer, came with news of the watch to Gerald. He was fussy with some delightfully irritating mannerisms. Gerald's wife, Ruth, (*Elaine Leggett*) was a strong foil to Gerald as a good Jewish wife, preparing the Passover Feast. She looked the part, with great characterisation and grew in strength as the play progressed. She had good comedy timing, dealing with the assembling family. David Roth, (*Ianto Wain*) Gerald's younger brother, was solid, and a complete contrast in personality to Gerald, being recently widowed and was attending Passover for the first time on his own.

Sasha Roth, (*Sarah Miller*) Gerald and Ruth's daughter, was played very confidently. Back from Uni, she shocked everyone with the news that she was dating David's son, Simon, who was her cousin. The reaction of her grandmother, Leila Roth, was cataclysmic! What a gift this part was for *Deborah Lisburne-Diacon*, who played the acerbic tongued Jewish matriarch with brilliant comic timing. Her bigoted, out-of-touch, non-PC dialogue and mannerisms were delivered superbly, as was her lengthy back story of the watch.

The back story was completed with Gerald having a visitation from 'The Collector' (*Nick Smith*) a ghostly form of Ribbentrop. His spectral presence was very effective and his clipped German accent made his presence even more chilling, demanding his watch back. This was enough to almost tip Gerald over the edge and helped him in his decision for the watch.

The dialogue throughout was tight and very funny. The Jewish family poking fun at themselves and hurling insults at each other was very effective. The fight between the brothers was well staged and in the end, the ill-fated watch got its come-uppance.

Although there had been a gap of 2 years since the last live performance, there were understandably one or two sticky moments, but the cast soon settled down and got into their stride.

The set was very good befitting the standing of the Roth family. The Jewish-style music throughout was appropriate. The sound and lighting were excellent, although, if the plumbing in my house was that loud, I would be worried! The large first-night audience were very appreciative and rightly so.

Congratulations to director Gareth Hammond and all involved on another splendid production and we look forward to the next show in May

Nigel James