



Mike O'Connor

Better Together

Mousetrap is a first-class GP production

By **BRENDA BROCHU**
of our staff

When an amateur theatrical production includes two or three outstanding performances the audience can be said to have had its money's worth.

But Grande Prairie Little Theatre's first-night production of *The Mousetrap* last night went well beyond that.

There wasn't a weak performance in the 2½-hour Agatha Christie mystery classic. Nor did the costumes, props or sets produce any jarring notes or intrude in the atmosphere of suspense maintained throughout.

With the level of performance so even and so high, it is hard to know where to start in discussing the play. But Margaret Kirwan, who has not appeared on the Grande Prairie stage for many moons, made an incomparable old biddy and bitch as Mrs. Boyle.

Being English, her English accent seemed more natural than did the accents of some of the other performers, and her sense of timing and the snooty inflection in her voice brought out the full humor of the script.

Ben Kijek, most recently seen as the Chorus in *Antigone*, was a marvellously flighty and unbalanced Christopher Wren. Not every actor can combine a love of nursery rhymes with suggested homosexual tendencies, but Mr. Kijek did it with aplomb.

ANOTHER DIFFICULT ROLE HANDLED

Margaret Wright pulled off another difficult role — that of brassy, mannish woman who nevertheless still feels the effects of her unhappy childhood.

Ms. Wright gave depth and feeling to what could have come off as a ludicrous, farcical character.

Richard Hendery brought an admirably sinister voice and suggestive leer to his role as the mystery European guest, Paravicini.

Once in a while he slipped out of his Italian accent, but never out of his unique character.

Rob Shields was a stern, macho Sergeant Trotter, and deserves much of the credit for making everyone in the cast seem suspicious.

Dave Arnell, Kelly Ditmars and Tom Hawkesworth all managed to create distinct personalities despite playing the most likable and normal-seeming characters.

Mr. Arnell in the role of boardinghouse keeper Giles Ralston was the ardent young husband, anxious to please his wife and possessive of her.

Ms. Ditmars as Molly Ralston was suitably naive and insecure, but warm, earnest and stunningly attractive.

Mr. Hawkesworth had the most laid-back role as Major Metcalf, but in such roles he shines.

PURPOSE NOT REVEALED

Although it sometimes seemed he was barely there, this all had a purpose which I won't be murderous enough to reveal.

Along with the performers, director Mike O'Connor and set designer Jim Adrain deserve to be singled out for special praise.

Mr. O'Connor, of course, is the one who put this motley collection of characters together into a coherent whole. He also kept the pace swift and unflagging.

Mr. Adrain developed a set that was not just attractive and suitable to the time and place, but one which facilitated movement by the actors and visibility of the actors to the audience.

The *Mousetrap*, in a word, is not just a winner as the GPLT season opener.

It deserves to be a sell-out.

