

Review of *The Mousetrap*

I'm more of a *flashy musicals that make you want to dance* kind of girl, so I wasn't psyched about seeing a straight play. But hey, I'm trying to expand my horizons! And if a play has been running since basically forever, there's got to be a reason. And you know what? There *is* a reason — and it's not about the production value or the cozy set or even the actors. It's about Christie's writing. Since its debut in 1952 at Theatre Royal in Nottingham, *The Mousetrap*, a play written by Agatha Christie, has become a British theater must-see. With a 2 hour and 20 minute run time including one 20-minute intermission, this production, directed by Philip Franks at St. Martin's Theatre has been going strong since 1974 — 28,000 performances and counting!

*The Mousetrap* is set in the 50s at Monkswell Manor, where newlyweds Giles and Mollie Ralston (Daniel Cech-Lucas and Lucy Doyle) are running a guesthouse during a snowstorm — and the guests are ... pretty strange. We've got Mrs. Boyle (Jules Melvin), a former magistrate with a serious attitude problem, Christopher Wren (Lynton Appleton), a young architect who's charming but odd, Major Metcalf (Ben Onwukwe), retired from the military, Miss Casewell (Elyssia Roe), who's mysterious, secretive and edgy, and Paravicini (Clive Marlowe), an Italian whose car just *happens* to break down outside. Just as they're all getting settled, the radio plays: a woman has been murdered in London! Sergeant Trotter (Sam Stafford), shows up on skis and warns everyone that the killer could be hiding among them, since they found Monkswell Manor's address in a notebook at the crime scene.

What stood out to me most was how deeply British the play felt, from its pacing to its characters. The humor was unmistakably British — dry and subtle. The emotional restraint in the characters was another mark of Britishness. Ms. Casewell, with her secretive and private nature, perfectly embodied this, making her one of the most intriguing characters. Even Giles and Mollie, the newlyweds, displayed a reserved, understated affection. Perhaps it's due to the fact that they only got married after three weeks of dating, but I like to think it's because the play is undeniably British.

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Every time I thought I'd figured out who the murderer was, another twist threw me off. Each character was written with enough motive that I kept changing my guess on who was guilty. And each of the actors did a phenomenal job at making me feel both suspicious and worried for them. That's what I *need* in a murder mystery. It's a testament to Christie's storytelling that I was so invested, even without the spectacle of musicals.

I also truly appreciated the progressive elements woven into the play and was honestly surprised. References to two gay characters, Wren and Casewell (my favorites), were particularly bold for 1950s Britain, where societal attitudes towards LGBTQ+ issues were still conservative. This inclusion not only added depth to the narrative but also showcased a subtle challenge to the norms of British society.

*The Mousetrap* reminded me that storytelling comes in all shapes and sizes — whether it's through catchy songs or straight dialogue, each can leave a mark. Who knew a straight play could be so captivating? It made me appreciate the power of a good story, even if it's not bursting with show tunes!

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