

Review

Agatha Christie's *Mousetrap* resonates with a new audience

By Alex Morris

Updated May 17 2024 - 4:50pm, first published 3:30pm

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Gerry Connolly and Geraldine Turner in *The Mousetrap*. Picture by Brian Geach

Wednesday night I found myself at Newcastle's opening of the longest running play in the world, *The Mousetrap*, written by Agatha Christie and directed by Robyn Nevin. I had only the vaguest of ideas of what this was about. It could have been the theatre version of the 2007 American film *Ratatouille* for all I knew; this was a famous production with some kind of vermin references.

But as soon as the curtains lifted and the acting began, I could tell out that I was in for a good whodunit, fantastic acting paired beautifully with curious, well-written characters. Despite the fact that this play was written in the 1940s as a radio play for Queen Mary, in 2024 it was still able to capture the depleted attention spans of millennial mobile scrollers like myself.

The premise is hardly fathomable in this day and age, but this doesn't make it less intriguing. Two young attractive English people have been married barely a year and have yet somehow acquired an enormous Guesthouse, Monkswell Manor. As the play progresses, we realise the two don't know each other as well as they thought.



After reporting landing equipment failure a plane circled the runway for three hours in Newcastle before making an emergency landing.

The scene opens on the opening night of their business endeavor where five strangers begin to arrive, chilled to the bone, eager to warm themselves by the roaring fire. Rather unfortunately, a gruesome murder has just been committed up the road and would you believe it, a huge snowstorm is blowing in. It's time to batten down the hatches and pray the killer isn't sleeping up the hall.

While the audience does sit through an additional murder, it's not graphic. The show is dark, humorous and entertaining. There's the occasional spooky moment with the odd guests. The song *Three Blind Mice* is particularly disturbing to hear when it's being sadistically whistled down the hallway or played with only one finger on the piano.

I loved the questions I began to ask myself after intermission. How well do any of us actually know one another, be we a married couple, weary travellers or violent stranglers? And how easy it is, given the right circumstances, to second guess everything you thought you knew about someone else.

[Good read: Carl Caulfield's new play](#)

At the end of the show the cast asked the audience not to give away the ending, so I won't let the cat out of the bag.

The Mousetrap makes for delightfully fun speculation throughout the never dull two-hour show. It's easy to imagine each of the fantastic characters as potential villains or victims. They're all endearing, but Mr Paravicini was the real show stealer for me, played by Aussie actor Gerry Connelly. After the show my friends and I debated where he was actually meant to be from? He was probably Italian? No maybe Spanish? French? Greek? Most certainly European.

The Mousetrap was fabulous; it's so easy to get caught up in it all.

***The Mousetrap*, Civic Theatre until May 25.**