

Writtle Cards – East Lynne
Writtle Village Hall – Friday 22 July 2011
Director – Daniel Curley

In shows where scenery is sparse or even non-existent, one relies heavily on the acting taking place onstage. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. Here it was most definitely the former.

The imaginative direction really set the scene right from the opening where the entire cast appeared onstage singing a muted version of 'Just a Song at Twilight' – beautiful. The play was also drawn to a close by the same – most touching for the audience having experienced the action of this classic piece.

Acting was of a very high standard with the majority of principals depicting their characters most convincingly. Laura Bennett, playing Lady Isabel Vane, was present onstage for almost the entire play and she not only mastered her character and emotions but also her very significant wordy dialogue. 'Dead, and never called me mother' is a great headline for the piece and how wonderful to be entertained to this degree with such a presentation of Ellen Wood's wonderful story. Exceptional performances were also provided by Liz Curley (Cornelia), Josephine Curley (Emma), Ben Fraser (Francis) and Paulette Harris (Barbara). Andy Millward's (Archibald) acting was good, but he needed a little help with his body language and gestures. Other players showed their characters with great authenticity mentioning especially Sharon Goodwin (Joyce – the maid).

Costuming was good with the period being properly taken into account. Because of the passage of time, it would have been nice to have seen some change their costumes, probably at the commencement of the second act.

Full marks are given also for the ingenious use of cast, not only to change scenery (always to the delightful 'Skater's Waltz' [I think]), but to enhance the mood and tension of some of the highly charged moments throughout the piece.

This was one I thoroughly enjoyed, notwithstanding being my first visit to the group.

Eric Smart