

Review

The Late Mrs Early

By Norman Robbins

Produced by Pete Grocock

Production: March 2009

Poor old Sam Early – all he wanted was a bit of peace and quiet. Peace and quiet had been in very short supply during his marriage to Alice and was about to get even rarer.

Norman Robbins' play *The Late Mrs Early*, set in late sixties Castleford, provided many an opportunity for a swift interchange of marital and neighbourly insult, confusion and misunderstanding.

Terry Early's announcement that he and Susan Rickworth intend to marry arouses the fury of formidable Alice, Terry's mother, on account of a previous relationship between her and Reuben Rickworth, Susan's father. What this relationship had been, all those years ago, remained a mystery and source of speculation until the very end of the play, but was sufficient in Alice's eyes to completely prohibit any such marriage. Not only was she prepared in life to go to any lengths to stop this wedding; as far as she was concerned the mere fact of being dead was no impediment. Thus the scene was set for an evening of confusion and drama, during which Sam, as the only one who could see the ghost of his former wife, was tormented almost out of his wits before peace eventually dawned.

Sam's misery was eventually ended by neighbour Mabel, who, having inadvertently killed Alice by lending her a faulty kettle, came up with the solution by means of some clever psychology. She persuaded Alice that she could indeed agree to the marriage, and depart for her eventual resting place, leaving everyone else in peace.

Chris Hoyle as Sam Early and Vivien Hughes as his unsettling wife were the stars in an accomplished cast, with new thespians Martin Phillips as Sam's pal Joe, and Shirley Holmwood as nosy neighbour Mabel a welcome addition to the RoCo players.

The set, consisting of the Early's living room in their terraced Castleford house, was of RoCo's usual high standard and very evocative of the sixties era. Congratulations to all involved, both backstage and front of house, and of course the players for a most enjoyable evening.