Iguana': commendable production

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lecher. Susan Morgello '78 looks 24 at the beginning of the play, and 30, perhaps, at the end, but never 40. Miss Jelkes is 40 if she's a day. The age problem is unanswerable with a student group. But there were problems with both roles that could have been avoided or corrected with direction, but weren't. Fennell was apparently never instructed to think about what Shannon is—a former Southern preacher kicked out of his first church for lechery and hence, a broken-down tour guide who regularly seduces one or two (or three or four) of "my ladies" on each tour (his latest conquest: a 30-year-old Baptist choir girl), a man of God turned heretic and atheist. Fennell gives Shannon outrage and defiance, but it's not clear that those are Shannon's real emotions. Fennell rages defiantly as he explains to Miss Jelkes the circumstances between his being locked out by the parishioners at his first church but the speech—Shannon's most important—clearly calls for self-deprecation, guilt, fear, and a range of other emotions. Fennell also misses completely the Southernness in Shannon's nature; when Fennell calls himself "a gentleman born and raised," it's caricature, not character. Fennell is right in not putting on false accents or mannerisms, but he has no feel for the grandeur and self-possession that come naturally to a Southern evangelist. He looks smaller as a result.

Morgello's portrayal of Miss Jelkes is better, but suffers from making the proper spinner overproper. Miss Jelkes left the self-consciousness of too much propriety; several circumstantialities of the globe behind her, but is haunted by much more serious demons of her own. Morgello's prissiness—and horribly affected accent—won't let the real Shannon come through for a large part of the play.

Other members of the cast face much smaller roles, and execute them well. Gretchen Megowen '76 is as breezy and engaging on stage—although perhaps a bit too loud—as Maxine Faulk, the not-very-brightened widow of the Costa Verde's owner, must be. The German family occupying another part of the hotel is well-played, provided that, as I suspect, Williams meant them only to provide some occasional comic relief. Jim Walker '78, as the grandfather, got the only really good aging treatment given to the cast, and played the world's oldest living poet with a deft sense of timing. Dramashop's technical crew carried out their tasks very well, with a beautiful set and excellent lighting and effects.

The flaws of Dramashop's Iguana stem ultimately from the group's ambition: the cast clearly could have handled a simpler play with easier characterizations without difficulty. I'm torn between commending them for their effort and admonishing them for shooting too high. Iguana is definitely worth seeing, and I'd recommend Dramashop's productions; it might have been better for the group, however, to have taken on something that would have stretched their talents without straining them so much.

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