



KANATA THEATRE

PRESENTS



**A COMEDY
THRILLER**

WHODUNNIT?

**BY
ANTHONY SHAFFER**



EARL OF MARCH SCHOOL

**Wednesday, Thursday, Friday & Saturday
May 6 to 9, 1987**

8.00pm

**All seats reserved \$6.00, \$5.00
Students, seniors (Weds, Thurs only) \$3.00**

Box office telephone 592-1715



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Kanata Theatre



Kanata Theatre in rehearsal for its upcoming production of Anthony Shaffer's murder mystery, *Whodunnit?* Left to right: Neil Robertson, Barry Calger, Laurence Thorton. The play runs May 6 to 9 at the Earl of March.
photo by Marcus Fajrajst

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Kanata Theatre

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eighteenth

season

1986 1987



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Arts & Entertainment

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The author of "Sleuth" is up to tricks again. Is the party just another party? Is blackmail really blackmail? Who is whom? What is what? Who really did "dunnit"? Kanata Theatre is proud to announce its upcoming production of Anthony Shaffer's "Whodunnit". Left to right: Christine Ballard, Gwendy Tolley and Jim Holmes photo by Marcus Fajrajal

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Schaffer's Whodunnit? sure to entertain



Veteran Kanata Theatre member Brooke Keneford displays little of the pressure that comes with directing Whodunnit, the troupe's final production of the current season. photo by Mark Henderson

by Mark Henderson

Trying to get information about the plot of a British 'whodunnit' is difficult at the best of times, but when you're asking the director, and the name of the play is *Whodunnit*, it's damn near impossible.

All Brooke Keneford, veteran member of the Kanata Theatre, will say about Anthony (Sleuth) Shaffer's black comedy *Whodunnit*, is that it's "a bit offbeat" and treats its stereotypical characters in an "overly dramatic, terribly biased" manner.

Schaffer's plays are known to have more twists than a pretzel, tempting audiences to figure out the conclusion before it arrives.

As the fourth and final Kanata Theatre production of the current season, *Whodunnit* presents something of a challenge to Keneford, who has directed close to 10 productions since joining Kanata Theatre in 1971.

Firstly, there is the large number of characters in the play, making the logistics of rehearsals and scheduling important. Also complicating the long process of preparing a play for the stage is the fact that *Whodunnit* is the final production of the year, leading one to expect the energy levels of the troupe's members to be depleted.

Happily for Keneford, this has not been the case. He reports that both the actors and technicians have been most helpful to ensure *Whodunnit* makes it to the stage of the Earl of March auditorium ready for public consumption.

Set in the 1930s in a large country manor, the cast of *Whodunnit* includes an array of unusual guests, a greasy Mediterranean type and, who else, but the ever present butler.

Keneford believes *Whodunnit* will prove popular with Kanata Theatre's faithful following.

"We're best known for British bedroom farces, but this is a black comedy with a bit of a twist to it. And there's a great mysterious twist in the second act, but I can't tell you about that," he says.

Keneford first entered the world of the theatre at the young age of 16 in his native Cambridge, England and worked with various community-based groups in that country. Entering the patents field in Manchester, he answered an ad for an Ottawa-based firm and emigrated to Canada 20 years ago. Yet a new country and profession didn't mean theatre was about to take a back seat. Keneford quickly became involved in the Ottawa Little Theatre's 1967 production of *Saint Joan*, helping out backstage and taking on

ing out backstage and taking on a couple of minor roles.

Attracted to the "British component" of Kanata, Keneford moved here and was pleasantly surprised by the presence of Kanata Theatre. To this day, he can state that "Kanata Theatre is the most dynamic of any groups I have been involved with. The level of commitment is very high and long-term. For many people it's almost like an unpaid business."

"Britain has a strong tradition of amateur theatre and it's influenced the Canadian scene to a certain extent," he says.

Whatever the influences on Kanata Theatre, its track record generates considerable expectation for its treatment of *Whodunnit*.

The play runs from May 6 to 9. Reserve tickets are available at the door or by calling 592-1715.



Jim Holmes, Martin Haynes and Christine Ballard in rehearsal for "Whodunnit" by Kanata Theatre. Photo by Marcus Fajrajal.

Kanata Theatre Presents "Whodunnit"

The author of "Sleuth" is up to tricks again. Is the party just another party? Is blackmail really blackmail? Who is whom? What is what? Who really did "dunnit"? Kanata Theatre is proud to announce its upcoming production of Anthony Shaffer's "Whodunnit".

Directed By: Brooke Keneford

Curtain Time: 8 PM

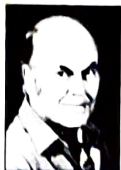
Presented At: Earl of March High School Auditorium, The Parkway, on Weds/Thurs/Fri/Sat, May 6/7/8/9, 1987.

For further information and ticket reservations, please call, Kanata Theatre Box Office at 592-1715.

Festivals, champions, stars

Portraying the leader of the Conservative party in a sketch on MacKenzie King was a change of pace for Laurence Thornton, one of the principal actors in the Kanata Theatre production of Anthony Shaffer's *Whodunnit*, which will be presented May 16-19 on the Earl of March Secondary School.

Thornton took time out from the Kanata rehearsal to appear as Hon. B.J. Munson at Kilmory, a musical comedy directed in the House of Commons by the National Film Board and the CBC. In the Shaffer comedy thriller, he is faced as Andrew's immediate superior, a character described as an angry politician.



Laurence Thornton.

Like Williams and Ramsey Miller agree that playing the role of Eugene Harrison and Elizabeth Rogers in the *De Pave* musical, the Ottawa Film Theatre's current production, is quite a challenge. They will be there nightly except Sunday until May 16.

The assignment is particularly arduous for Williams, who commutes to the theatre from his home in Vanhook Hill, a 100 kilometre round trip makes good use of his time by brushing up on his lines with the aid of a telephone.

William is performing *Macbeth* at the Kanata Theatre at its May 11-12 concert. Directed by American director Leopold Hager, the Boston-born actor will serve as coach for the chamber music concert to be given next Sunday afternoon in the NAC at 6 p.m. He will also direct Neal Gripp, who is playing the role of the young boy, in the *Macbeth* production.

Thornton also will collaborate with his director, Robert DePave, at a free concert in the University of Ottawa's Tabaret Hall Thursday at 8 p.m.

Featured are works by Brahms, Bachmannoff, Tchaikovsky, Liszt, and Schubert. Tickets are \$5.00. Tickets are available at the University of Ottawa's music building.

Shahid Parvez Khan, a leading young actor from India, will perform at La Salle Secondary School Friday at 8 p.m. Tickets will go to the University of Ottawa's music building.

is graduates who obtain all marks of 90 and 91 in open flute classes at the Kanata Music Festival last week will appear in the *Macbeth* series at St. Andrew's Church Wednesday at 12:15 p.m. She will be joined by pianist Evelyn Greenberg in works by Bach, Beethoven and Chopin. Donald McKelvie and the 22-year-old flutist's festival performance were

Jean Southworth



of professional standard. The festival winners and Thursday-Ten Highlights concert will be held at St. Andrew's Church at 2:30 and 3:30 p.m. A piano recital at Woodcliffe United Church tonight includes the Ottawa Music Club Trophy finale. Adult vocal finals will be held Tuesday at 7 p.m. at St.

Timothy's Presbyterian Church. Ottawa's Chinese, Irish and Welsh choral societies are performing at Brimley Road Baptist Church at 2:30 today. The St. Andrew's Singers, a handbell group directed by Stuart Bolton, will be heard at St. Paul's Eastern United Church tonight at 7:30.

Whodunnit keeps the audience guessing

By Barbara Cook

Canoe Theatre

The maddening thing about Anthony Shaffer's *Whodunnit* is that you can't begin to tell anyone what's on film about it without totally spoiling the surprise.

Shaffer has created an enjoyable and engaging murder mystery that also sends up the whodunnit genre, pokes fun at the methods of fictional detectives, and takes a few shots at the acting profession.

Best of all, it keeps the audience guessing, even after what looks to be the final curtain.

The Kanata Theatre production of the play, which opened Wednesday at Earl of March High School, is entertaining enough but doesn't take full advantage of the play's particular strengths.

The actors, under the direction of Brooke Keneford, don't make the most of the comic elements of Shaffer's play — particularly in the first act, when many good lines drop like lead balloons.

Keneford and the performers also seem unsure whether to take Shaffer's characters totally seriously or turn them into caricatures, with the result that most of the performances are rather flat.

And the pace is too slow for a play that requires both precise comic timing and an appropriate buildup of dramatic anticipation.

But there are enough surprises in the play itself to make *Whodunnit* virtually unrepeatable.

Theatre review

Whodunnit?

Kanata Theatre

Earl of March High School

4 The Parkway

May 16-19 p.m.

We know from the beginning of *Whodunnit* that the narrator, voice disguised, is the murderer — but who is the narrator?

Seven guests have assembled at the English country home of Silas Bareby. One of them is a blackmailer, with damaging information about each of the other guests.

All the guests have equal means, motive and opportunity for his inevitable murder.

But the plot thickens even further when it is discovered that none of the guests, including the murdered man, is what he or she initially seems.

Barry Calger is enjoyable as the ubiquitous butler, as is Neil Robertson as the host.

One thing that threatens to ruin the whole production is the fact that the narrator's voice, even

disguised, is sufficiently distinctive to rule out all but a couple of the characters as the murderer.

This should be remedied immediately, so that the audience can take full advantage of the many plot twists, character revelations and clues in this unusual mystery.

Arts & Entertainment

Theatre Review

Major plot twist saves Whodunnit's bacon

by Mike Anderson

At the intermission, I walked out shaking my head. The first act of *Whodunnit*, Kanata Theatre's final presentation of the year, which ran at Earl of March from May 6 to 9, had been a carnival of cliché, cardboard-thin characters, dumb dialogue and enough hamming to keep a deli in business for a year. Not to mention some rather sexist and racist lines whose originality didn't impress me.

The plot? Eight people gathered together for a weekend at an English country manor, linked only by an oily blackmailer, one Andreas Capistrone (Laurence Thornton), who has some dirt on each of them. Add a thunderstorm, a drunken butler and the penultimate discommodation of Mr. Capistrone's head from his shoulders. Everyone, from the embezzling host

to the retired Rear Admiral (Gerry Langen) with a predilection for young boys, is suspect. One of them is a murderer.

And you thought this stuff only happened in Agatha Christie or Wilkie Collins novels. A neat plot twist in the second act makes *Whodunnit* an engaging satire of the hoary 1930s drawing room mystery. Under Brooke Keneford's direction, the cast has put together a rather nifty show which, despite some flaws in delivery, was pleasing overall.

You want the plot twist? Oh, all right.

The eight characters gathered in the house of Silas Bareby are just that — characters. In the first act, the audience is led to believe that the play is set in the 1930s, with the help of the disguised, disembodied voice of the murderer, who announces the future in crime. Act two sees the arrival of

Inspector Bowden (Jim Holmes) and his Sergeant (John Acheson), in modern suits and ties, amid the tuxes and dresses of the '30s. It seems that the suspects are acting, in the time-honored Shakespearean tradition, in a "play within a play." Literally in this case, as all reveal themselves to be actors, ostensibly hired for a "murder game" for Mr. Bareby (Neil Robertson) who also turns out to be an actor.

Capistrone is revealed to be Jerry Marshall, a tyrannical agent who represented most of the actors. The question becomes, who killed Jerry Marshall? Was it his homosexual lover? The woman he arranged an abortion for? The actress whose criminal habits he knew? The dippy blonde (Christine Ballard) and her vain paramour (Martin Haynes)?

The good inspector, draped in a Sherlockian cloak, undertakes

to solve the crime, aided by occasional hints from the culprit, in a high-pitched, disguised voice.

As the play progresses, the melodramatic, almost farcical conventions of the English mystery are lampooned. Each character represents an archetype, and, as actor, skews his or her adopted persona.

The first act is deceiving, and the introduction of "reality" in the second act, as the actors peel off makeup and wigs on stage, is a fun touch. Barry Calger, a familiar name to amateur theatre audiences, put in a nice performance as Perkins, the butler, as did Wendy Tolley and Sally Raney, as the crotchety Lady Tremurion and the near-blind Dame Edith respectively.

Anthony Shaffer's writing is accessible and fun — sort of an English stage version of *The Croup*. *Devisive*, an affectionately makes fun of its con-

ventions and canons. The dialogue between the characters is incredibly facile and glib, at times to the point of annoyance. The police are revealed to be avid mystery readers, which helps them solve the crime in the end.

Occasionally, Shaffer also seemed to use extremely poor taste in his lines. In the first act, there were some gratuitously sexist and racist lines which appeared to exist only to get some easy laughs. Constant referrals to greasy Greeks and the Rear Admiral's sexual peccadilloes landed flat after a while.

Despite these complaints, *Whodunnit* was a fun way to spend an evening. I didn't expect the second act to turn out the way it did, and I'm glad I stayed around to see. The Christie-type mystery is tailor-made for lampooning, and Shaffer's play does the job quite nicely.



BEFORE
AND
AFTER



WHAT A BLOODY SHAME.



YUK ---

--- THUMP!

(RON'S MASTERPIECE).



... IT WAS 'IM →



1987  1988

**KANATA
THEATRE**

invites you
to its
nineteenth annual
theatrical feast

this year's menu,
1 of these,
2 of those,
&
1 of the other

















