

Let's Murder Marsha Impressive Accomplishment for UPEI Theatre Society

by Joel MEGGS

What a season it has been for amateur theatre. There have been some really fantastic shows in the past months, including *Vanities*, *The Vagina Monologues*, and *The One-Acts*. But get ready for the show stopper that's going to be the icing on the cake. Get ready for *Lets Murder Marsha*.

While quite similar to last year's play, *It Runs in the Family*, in that it is a drawing room comedy, *Lets Murder Marsha* is better. It's better because it is better performed - at least it was in the dress rehearsal that I took in this week. Better because it is the Webster's definition of an ensemble production. Like O.J.'s Dream Team, the Canadian Olympic Hockey team, or the cast of *The Godfather*, everyone in this show is la crème de la crème. I've praised most of these people in these pages before—Miranda Tremere and Stephanie McCormick from *Vanities*, Adam Gauthier and Jade Pollard from the *One Acts*, and director Juhli Lyncaster from last year's *It Runs in the Family*—this is a powerhouse of a cast. And they are on familiar comedic ground with *Lets Murder Marsha*. Sure, it's fairly formulaic in its use of suspenseful plot devices, but the real fun is watching the cast pull off a very tricky play.

Tricky because of the numerous twists, turns, and convolutions. The play centres around Marsha, who reads too many mystery novels. After reading *The Creeping Slasher*, and overhearing her husband discuss her surprise birthday party, she becomes convinced that her husband and his "lover" are conspiring to kill her. Nothing too original here. The rest of the play involves Marsha launching a pre-emptive strike against her husband and the interior decorator he has hired (and whom Marsha has mistaken as his mistress). She enlists the aid of her next door neighbour Virgil, who claims to be a pharmacist.

Of course, as the play moves along, no one is whom he or she claims,

and all sorts of startling revelations are made. There is nothing whatsoever original about the script; Virgil mixes up a batch of odourless, flavourless poison, which is put in a liquor bottle, but then no one knows which liquor bottle it's in and who's drunk it. It's that sort of a play. It requires a great deal of suspension of disbelief in order for all the plot twists and turns to work out.

But that doesn't matter. What matters are the great performances. Not only does the cast pull off a technically demanding show, but it looks like they're having a hell of a lot of fun, which is a lot of fun to watch. For instance, when the action devolves into a large pillow fight onstage between all the characters—it makes for good watching.

Gauthier plays Virgil as an overly fidgety, almost Woody Allenesque like character. Very good. Miranda Tremere plays the intrusive and counterproductive maid (who likes to sample all the liquor) as bubbly yet clever (some of the best comic moments are her literal interpretations of words—she's almost like Amelia Bedelia). Excellent. Jade Pollard plays Persis, the interior decorator who's supposedly aiding in Marsha's death. She, too, is a lover of suspense novels, and her knowledge of them comes in handy in the final act. Pollard's always a lot of fun to watch in action. Josh Hooper is just too perfect for the role of Tobias, playing him as a cool and annoyed man in the midst of all this madness. Very convincing. And Stephanie McCormick is equally well-suited to the role of Marsha, playing her with equal parts kookiness and nervousness. The smaller roles of Ben and Lynette, are played quite competently by John Flood and Stephanie GrosLouis, respectively.

Under the watchful eye of Juhli Lyncaster, the Theatre Society has put together a production that is a guaranteed crowd pleaser, which is obviously what they were going for. With such a juggernaut of a cast they could have

easily attempted something more challenging, but I guess after the success of *It Runs in the Family*, they wanted to stick with a sure-fire winning genre.

Which is too bad, because as good a job as they do with this play, the script is really lacking in, well, everything. Although there is some clever wordplay, and has an interesting ending which explains away the characters' willingness to be deceived, it certainly isn't as good as last year's full length.

For one thing, it isn't quite as manic, and for another, we don't get to see Adam in a dress. But I suppose when dealing in comedies, you can't have a winner every time, and at least this cast gets as much as is possible out of a very lacklustre script. Congrats on a great season!

Lets Murder Marsha runs from March 21-23 at the Carrefour Theatre at 8pm. Tickets are \$5.00 for students and \$8.00 for adults.

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CADRE POETRY ISSUE

The *Cadre* poetry issue will be appearing! Soon! All UPEI students, professors and staff are heavily encouraged/threatened to send in their poetry. Deadline for poems is March 29th. Experience is not necessary, nor is rhyming or especially good grammar, though we do not frown on these things. Poems can be dropped off at the *Cadre* office (Main 06) or by emailing them to mdorrell@upe.ca. Deadline for poems is March 29th. Poems must have a title, an author, and we would really like to have them on disc because we are atrocious typistsd. Deadline for poems is March 29th.