

Murder Game second degree

**Murder Game by Dan Ross
Citadel Shochor Theatre
Until February 6**

by Charmaine Roux

I would like to applaud the production of this play, but I cannot. In puzzlement, I ask myself why? The set is elegant, the lighting good, special effects adequate. Yet the quality of acting, on the whole, is poor.

The story centers around the recently rented home of dead film actress Dianne Napiers. A young illustrator of children's books, Beth Manners (played by Lenore Zann), purchases the lease. Released from the psychiatric ward of a Toronto hospital, she seeks the seclusion of a quiet home. Beth wishes to escape the tragic memory of her dead lover, Ian Harris, whom she accidentally killed. What she does not know however, is that Dianne Napiers was murdered in her home, strangled by a yellow bathrobe cord. Beth Manners too, is marked for murder. The connection, Ian Harris. And the plot thickens, so to speak.

I cannot help thinking that the suspense in this play could have been heightened. The playwright, Dan Ross, obviously intends to produce a modern gothic drama of sorts. All the attributes of a gothic thriller are present.

A young heroine besieged by unknown dangers is alone in an eerie, lonely house. The house is shrouded in mist, dark shadows and mystery. The aspect of dark, evil foreboding could have been increased by more use of special effects, such as the lighting, mist and wind.

Playwright Ross created a modern Canadian Gothic mystery. But in this production, such a drama is neither created nor attained. And it seems to hinge singularly on the quality of acting, or rather the lack of it.

Lenore Zann is simply terrible as Beth Manners, the terrified young heroine. Her acting is affected. Her lines are always



Araby Lockhart, Brian Taylor and Lenore Zann in *Murder Game*

spoken with extreme intensity, often where such emphasis is not warranted. Her shrill, unbelievable shrieks of terror at sudden entrances and exits of characters reflect Zann's lack of comfort in the role.

She gives a shallow re-creation of a haunted, remorseful and later bitter young woman.

It is a great pity to see Miss Zann in a role that she is ill at ease in portraying. After seeing her excellent performance in the made-for-television Canadian series, *I Married the Klondike*, it is difficult to comprehend her lack of quality acting in *Murder Game*. Lenore Zann is a talented actress.

Since the production revolves around her performance, it is difficult to credit the play as a success.

There are some redeeming pearls to gather in this production however. The role of Daphne Fielding, the housekeeper, played by Araby Lockhart, is very well done. She is a sour, gossipy old woman with a bitter, peppery tongue. Her constant

stream of acid repartees are reflected throughout the play. When she speaks of Tim Donahue, the Irish real estate salesman played by John MacKay (also a fine performance) she says: "He's the sort who would sell a farmer a milk machine and take his only cow as down payment."

Beth Manners' would-be rescuer is Ralph Nelson, a murder mystery writer, played by Brian Taylor. This bizarre author revels in knowing the intricacies of murder. He says, "I like to play out my plots before I write them. I call it my murder game."

Taylor's acting is disappointing. In the first act his performance was excellent. He created the role of the romantic hero/villain with a shadowy, mysterious past and dubious character with ease and grace. In the second act his acting deteriorated. His lines came out rapid fire and abrupt. He seemed to revert back to the awkward style of other performances I've seen him in.

Joe Kenyon's performance as Albert Higgins was lacking. He was much better in *The Three Musketeers*.

Ah yes, the mystery element of the play. The plot is intriguing and complex. Who is the murderer and what is the motive? Your quest for the answer, will keep you guessing until the end. I do recommend that people see this play.

Eating Raoul: biting satire a nice light snack

Eating Raoul
Cineplex 7

by Gilbert Bouchard

Comedy is an intellectual endeavor; a novel method of rehashing some human concern. Ridicule our romantic voyages, you have a light romantic comedy. Ridicule our way of speech, you have puns, wisecracks, and plays on words. Ridicule our social mores and the basic social tenets that hold society together, and you have a smart little black comedy called *Eating Raoul*.

A feisty little movie about man and wife (Paul and Mary Bland) who go to a ridiculous extreme (ie. killing rich swingers for their money) to start their own restaurant; and their relationship with a shifty little thief by the name of Raoul.

But while cronicling their efforts to raise the needed money to start their little eatery the flick satirizes every conceivable

Henry IV medieval marvel

**Henry IV, part I
Citadel Rice Theatre
Until January 23**

The *Henry IV, part I* as produced by the Citadel Rice Theatre is an involving, exciting spectacle. Director Gordon McDougall is to be highly praised for achieving this result in so few rehearsals.

Richard McMillan performed well as Hal, but the character was too static in his development.

James Blendick played Falstaff so that the audience always wanted more. William F. MacDonald was handsome as Hotspur.

Gwynyth Walsh was perfect as Lady Mortimer (her love song was beautiful), but overplayed Mistress Quickly (perhaps to emphasize the contrast).

The set design as a medieval amphitheatre was carefully planned, but the audience still saw the backs of characters too often. The props, tables and chairs were also carefully located on stage to avoid obscuring the audience's vision.

The medieval English setting and atmosphere were enhanced by use of music, costumes and realistically brutal fighting. From the glittering cape of King Henry to the simple peasant dress of Mistress Quickly, the costumes were admirably functional. Kudos to Nadine Baylis.

The audience was even allowed to smell the gruesome stench of the battle. The fight between Hal and Hotspur is the final touch in creating the brutal and cruel, physically abusive slaughter in early 15th century England.

The play's theme of how honor and pride can drive people into difficult follies was shown in the almost absurd fighting between two such gallant young men as Hal and Hotspur.

Unless you're allergic to smoke (it gets strong in the battle sequence), go and see *Henry IV*.

As a final note, I would like to thank the Citadel's House Manager for moving me and my guest from the front row seats we were assigned and seating us farther up in order that we could better enjoy the play.

The play itself is good, the script interesting but not brilliant, and it is Canadian. You will not be disappointed in the content or the mystery. You might be disappointed in the calibre of this rendition. One hopes the acting will improve as the play continues its run.

human foible, human more, and social convention.

Hurled at you with grace, skill, and machine gun timing are such social institutions as marriage, sex, drugs, economic status and suburbia, cannibalism, hot tubs, and dog food manufacturer's ethics. The yuckles keep on a-coming.

The flick is quick, witty, and always off the wall. Neither pandering to any intellectual conceit or condescending to any sublime cinematic ripoffs, *Eating Raoul* is a dry, literate satire, but not a film for everyone. If you aren't willing to suspend righteous indignation and any pseudo-moral outrage to see behind the rather disgusting premise to the hilarious satiric core, then you're wasting your time at this flick.

Overall a gem of a little low-budget film, slick, appealing and super-funny. Trot on down to the Cineplex and sink your teeth into Raoul.

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