

Century Church Theatre brings in Deathtrap on March 5]

By Constance Scrafield

Century Church Theatre in Hillsburgh is back with a thriller-comedy.

Deathtrap, by Ira Levin, opens for the first of three Sunday matinees on March 5 and running over the following two weekends. Evening performances are on Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. and matinees on the Sundays at 2:30 p.m. The last show is March 19, the Sunday matinee.

Everything we love about the genre, Deathtrap is a fine wash of threats and counter-threats and counter those ones too. In this story, set in 1970, Sidney Bruhl is a well-weathered playwright of murder thrillers who has hit a dry spell and has bumped well and truly into a time of writer's block.

Rescue, it seems, has arrived by mail in the form of a draft play that is the very thing needed ? yet not Sidney's work.

After a debate between Sidney and his wife, Myra, on the matter of proposed theft of the new script and possible disposal of a young playwright, the fun begins and who knows where it will end? Not the audience for sure, as they are pushed and prodded by this very entertaining and clever show.

?It's really an interesting 1970 play,? said Erin Montgomery of Century Church Theatre, and producer and Stage Manager. ?Greg [Allen as Clifford] is great to watch and Keith [Assoun in the role of Sidney] is older and they get along so well. Angie [Sapalovski as Myra Bruhl] plays an older person who is not dumb and Nick [Farrow, playing Porter Milgrim] has acted before a number of times on this stage.?

There are nice coincidences within the cast and director too, that add an interesting background note.

Carol McCone Day, performing the role of eccentric psychic Helga ten Dorp with a Dutch accent, has done this play before. Brigida Scholten, as director, has played the role of Helga in a previous production elsewhere, offering rich dynamics for the Helga role.

Ms. Montgomery told the Citizen that rehearsals are going really well and the cast is ?well-seasoned.?

Century Church Theatre usually stages a thriller at this time of year ?to get everybody's blood boiling.?

?We're nothing without our volunteers. They are wonderful for taking the time to make it all happen.?

?We found this amazing local artist, Nancy Dale, who has created this wonderful piece for our set,? said Montgomery. ?She's spent hours and hours doing it. When the audience comes in,? she assured us, ?they will be wowed. We're so lucky to have her in our family, working with us for the first time. A show is nothing without the artists. We are lucky to have painters and costume makers and we are so lucky to have all our volunteers.?

Robert Bell is back to do the lighting for Deathtrap and Ms. Scholten's husband, Ernest, has provided the production ?with some eerie, really tense music,? as Montgomery calls it.

Members of Century Church Theatre were very sad to announce the passing of co-founder Jo Phenix late in 2022. Together with her husband, Neville Worsnop, they founded the Erin Arts Foundation Inc. and the Century Theatre Guild, based at the Century Church Theatre.

?Jo mentored both me and Brigida for many years,? said Montgomery. ?That makes this production all that much more special that we get to work together. All of us miss her ? she had the answer to everything and she could build anything and could always find

the right prop.?

Jo Phenix knew how to bring out the best in everyone; she possessed special insight. She was a teacher, seeing the gift in everybody which she would mentor and mould. ?She gave enough rope, never screaming, the calm centre. All these years later this theatre is thriving; she loved the theatre,? said Montgomery.

Erin Montgomery has been with Century Church Theatre for 11 years. As stage manager for this production, she says ?putting all the pieces together, a paranoid control freak makes a very good stage manager.?

?If you like thrillers and great talent, beautiful sets and you want to be entertained by the strange or mysterious, this is the show,? she adds. ?Half the actors are theatre award winners.?

This production of Deathtrap is dedicated to Jo Phenix.

Still mindful of COVID, masks are suggested while attending the show. For the time being, the concession in the theatre is not open; bringing water is permitted.

For all the times and details and to purchase tickets, call the Box Office from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., 7 days a week at (519) 855-4586, with VISA or Mastercard. E-Transfer payment also accepted.