

Robert F. Hall Drama has another great adventure to L.A.

By Constance Scrafield

If you are done with the Winter Garden Theatre; been off-Broadway in New York; played in London, England; tickled the stage in Macerata, Italy; and performed in the Stratford Festival with your own version of Taming of the Shrew, where do you go next? To the Bathurst Theatre in Los Angeles, of course.

Or you do if you are participating with Hall Drama, as run by co-directors and teachers Messrs Adriano and Ciccotelli at Robert F Hall Catholic Secondary School.

This year, they are presenting their own version of Black Comedy by British playwright Peter Shaffer. The nub of this farce is the reversal of light and dark: when the lights are on, the play is in darkness and, should the lights go off, all is revealed in the play. Combine this with brilliant slap stick and comedic dialogue, and you have all the fun that makes farce such great entertainment. As to the plot, well, no disappointment there.

Brindsley, a young sculptor, is about to have a visit from a wealthy art collector and his prospective father-in-law. With a view to impressing both, he and his fiancé Carol borrow several pieces of antique furniture from his neighbour, who is currently away for the weekend. From there, there are misinterpretations, chaos of a power outage, ebb and flow of characters, half-lies and full rages. This is all lovely stuff and a proper challenge for the talents of the students performing in this Hall Drama presentation.

We had the chance to pay a visit to the school during a rehearsal late last week and took the opportunity to talk to the students and the two teachers.

It is a very physical play, Rob Ciccotelli told us. Very slap stick.

There is a couch in the centre of the set.

We brought in a film of Dick van Dyke doing his flip over the couch so that Brindsley could learn to do it, Ciccotelli said.

Learning to do it has been going on since October when rehearsals began.

We have our dancers teaching the others how to fall, Ciccotelli explained. Early on, we put a blindfold on them to teach them about body language when you can't see. In acting, usually you make eye contact, but when it's dark, you don't. So, they're acting as though they are in the dark.

It's body language that tells the story and promotes the illusion, Frank Adriano added, so, it's dark in the beginning for about eight minutes.

They outlined how they came to choose this play for this year.

Adriano and I saw it (the play) about five years ago. We told each other when we have the right cast, we'll do this show, Ciccotelli recalled. One of the reasons this play appealed to us is that all the rules they've learned are all gone it brings out the acting skills up a bit.

This year, with this cast, it was the right play, Adriano commented. It's got to be finally balanced it's pushing us out of our comfort zone.

It's not a typical play, One of the students put in. Learning for the actor a new experience for the audience.

In addition to performing the whole several times, including the once at the Bathurst Theatre in L.A, the students are also acting in the Sears Ontario Drama Festival in Toronto, where they are restricted to 50 minutes, not 10 seconds more.

Ten seconds after the 50 minutes and you're disqualified, Adriano warned them.

This means cutting as much as half an hour out of the entire show.

It's really tricky with all the variables, he pointed out. Taking into account laughter (we hope) from the audience and the physicality of the content.

The trick to choosing the right play for Hall Drama each year depends on who signs up, not only for the show but also for the trip that the production will take. Next year, they are planning to go to London and Paris with Black Comedy.

One thing the teachers wanted to make clear is that the school's principal, Tom Wisnicki, has been a tremendous supporter of the drama group.

He's been so supportive over the last two years, remarked Adriano. He made that leap of faith and we didn't let him down.

Black Comedy will be staged at Robert F Hall March 6 at 7 p.m. and March 9 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$8 at the door.

