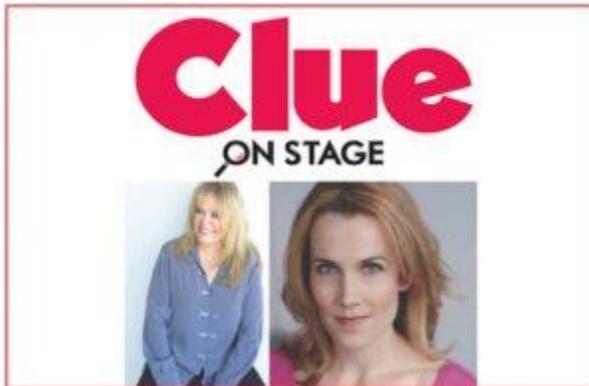


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'Clue' Kills The Audience With Laughter Every Night At Bucks County Playhouse In New Hope



By John Dwyer

A whodunit is difficult to pull off. If you are carrying out a caper, you better be a smart cookie. Otherwise, a whodunit turns into a “whydoit.” And writing becomes even more difficult, if you are doing a hybrid of mystery and farce. This is the daunting task that has been set before the

writer, director and producing staff of the Bucks County Playhouse.

You may have further trepidation about going to a production whose name is pulled off of a board game. What’s next? A period piece called “Monopoly” about an overly ambitious billionaire who wants to take over all the prime property in Atlantic City? Sorry, that’s reality TV, and a different genre.

I had never seen the movie, and considering the bar of what it would take to make this a good show, I came to it with not the highest expectations. But when I saw Hunter Foster was directing, that gave me pause. He consistently has worked magic at the Playhouse. And though I was poised to finally write a bitchy review, Hunter Foster foiled me again! The show is delightful.

This is not the musical that failed back in the 90s. It is a snappy, well-choreographed murderous romp, that imaginatively draws you in as the bodies fly hither and yon and pile up on the couch. This

comedy-mystery is filled with chase scenes and stylized performances that one might expect from a melding of Agatha Christie and the Marx Brothers. The dialogue is fast paced and cornball:

“Do you like Kipling?”

“Sure. I’ll eat anything.”

The performances are broad and hilarious. This is a true ensemble and the...timing...is...everything. The cast includes all six board pieces with two-time Emmy winner and Golden Globe Award Winner Sally Struthers as Mrs. Peacock, Tony and Outer Critics Circle Best Actress Nominee Erin Dilly as Mrs. White, Kevin Carolan from Broadway’s “Newsies” as Colonel Mustard, Brian J. Carter is Mr. Green, Clifton Duncan is Professor Plum, and Lindsay Nicole Chambers from Broadway’s “Lysistrata Jones” and “Hairspray” plays Miss Scarlet.

Also in attendance are Carson Elrod from Broadway’s “Peter and the Starcatcher” as Wadsworth the butler, Claire Simba as the maid, Yvette , as well as Cassandra Dupler and William Youmans from Broadway’s “Wicked”and “Billy Elliot” playing multiple roles. Many will come just to see Struthers, who does a fine turn as the Martha Mitchell-like Ms. White, but this is an ensemble show and all of the cast is equally impressive.

The premise, in the style of Agatha Christie’s “And Then There Was None,” is that a select group of guests are invited to the manor of Mr. Boddy. The aforementioned six guests arrive during a storm and all of them have a secret reason for accepting the invitation of Boddy, who they have never met. All of the attendees are connected to Washington D.C. One of the guests recognizes the maid — another, the cook. Questions abound as to who they are, why they were invited to dinner and then, suddenly, the host is found dead. This is only the first dead body of the evening, as the night careens from one corpse and one suspect to another. But by the end, all is made clear.

This new adaptation of the movie “Clue,” which was originally written by Jonathan Lynn, has additional material from Eric Price and Hunter Foster. Besides Mr. Foster’s insightful direction, a special shout out to Jennifer Cody for coordinating precise ensemble movement for the chase scenes and in going from room to room that help give the piece a cinematic, screwball comedy sensibility. Also recognition for the most ambitious set yet for the Bucks County Playhouse that was designed by the talented Anna Louizos. Nicole Moody’s costumes were on the money. I especially loved Miss Scarlet’s dress, which seemed a tribute to another Scarlet. Lighting was by Ryan J. O’Gara and sound by Bart Fasbender.

While in the middle of writing this review, I just discovered that the producers of “Clue,” the Araca Group, have optioned the Monopoly game from Hasbro and will be making it into a musical comedy. I feel quite prescient. But it doesn’t take a Sherlock Holmes to know that if they want it to be a success, then they should hire Hunter Foster and Jennifer Cody to direct. Maybe someone should option Mattel’s Lie Detector or Hasbro’s Battleship, considering the current political atmosphere.

Regardless, come to Mr. Boddy’s dinner party. It’s mystery, it’s farce, it’s vaudeville. And the winner of the night is you, if you are game enough to buy a ticket to see this very original and cleverly funny “Clue.” I’m dead serious.

The show runs through May 20 at Bucks County Playhouse in New Hope. Call (215) 862-2121 for tickets, or visit [BCP online](#).