

Southport Dramatic Club



Proscenophobia (Stage Fright)

A backstage who-dunnit thriller

by Bettine Manktelow
directed by Hilary Thomson

13th - 21st April 2012
7.45pm



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Director's notes

Welcome to an evening of murder and mystery.

As we all know everyone enjoys a good thriller and this particular play does not disappoint. All my cast have worked so hard perfecting the characters, as none of them have any resemblance to the character they are portraying (or so they tell me!) Any one of them could be a suspect. The clues are



Hilary Thomson
Director

in the script - just when you think you have worked it out the ending has a very surprising twist.

My grateful thanks to all my hardworking cast and crew and also to you our audience for your continuing support. We hope you enjoy our production.

Hilary Thomson
Director



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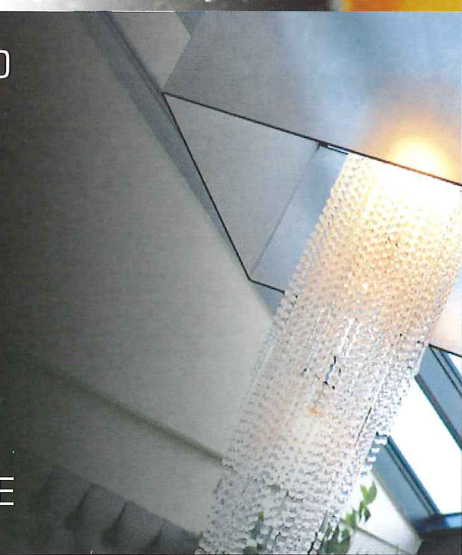
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A look at the characters in Proscenophobia

THE author of *Proscenophobia*, Bettine Manktelow, takes the behaviour of her characters from her life experiences.

The cast in the play portray a number of illustrations of this, which include the competitive element between Addie and Millie. There is also the fact that Pearl tries to out-perform Millie.

Proscenophobia is set in the dressing room of a theatre during a thriller.

In the opening scenes the audience is introduced to Addie and Millie.

Addie has the main role in the thriller and she likes to dominate Millie, who is her understudy - this is shown in the way Addie speaks about her to Justin, the company

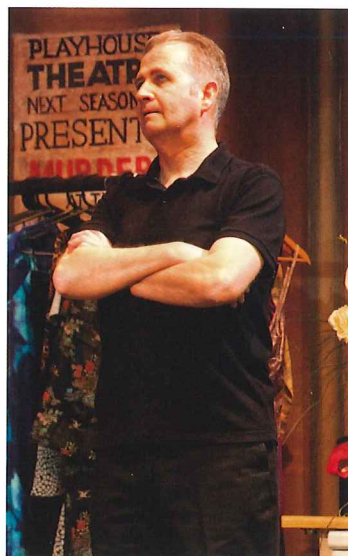
manager, when we learn that it is Addie's dressing room and that Millie who hates to share with Pearl, is allowed to share it only because Addie has said so.

Addie is also always asking Millie to carry out chores for her. For example she asks Millie to put a bouquet of flowers in a vase for her. Millie says no at first, adding: "I might be your understudy, but I'm not your slave." However Millie changes her mind when Pearl offers to help.

Later Millie is annoyed because Pearl has tried to outperform her on stage. Millie is resentful of her and says: "You upstaged me throughout our scene together, forcing me to turn my back on the audience four times!"

In the ensuing argument Pearl calls her a "prima donna" and Millie throws her out of the dressing room.

There are other emotions displayed in the play by various characters, but to go into those may give the murderer away.....



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History of Who-dunnits

THE audience in *Proscenophobia* do not find out who the murderer is until the very end of the performance. In who-dunnits the puzzle is the main feature of the book, play or film. The audience, or the reader is often given a number of clues by the author to help them work out the murderer before they are revealed. Many of the characters in the play have a motive for the crime.

The who-dunnit was very popular between the 1920s and 1950s, which was the "Golden Age" of detective fiction. During this time, the best writers of who-dunnits were British and included Agatha Christie, Christianna Brand and Edmund Crispin.

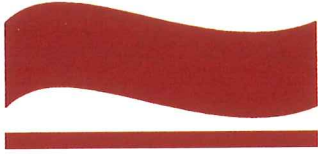
Agatha Christie, the Queen of Crime, is considered to be the best-selling novelist of all. Arguably, her most famous

who-dunnit play is *The Mousetrap* which has a famous twist at the end. The play was first put on stage in London in 1952 and is still performed today. In the history of British theatre, it is the longest running play. This November it celebrates its 60th birthday. Bettine Manktelow makes reference to *The Mousetrap* in *Proscenophobia*. One of the main characters, Addie Marchbanks, is talking about the thriller she is in to Justin James, the company manager. She is worried about the future of the thriller and says: "I don't know what more I can do. There must be a way to keep going. After all, *The Mousetrap* nearly folded after a few months, and then miraculously took off. Nobody knows why." Another famous Christie who-dunnit book is *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*.

Americans wrote who-dunnits as well and they were different to English ones, which often had a set format. In the American who-dunnits the plots were grittier. The storylines were often put together in the same way that the British ones were. An example of an American writer who wrote who-dunnits was Raymond Chandler. Among his work is *The Big Sleep*, which was first published in 1939, and was made into a film starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall. In recent years who-dunnits have even made it onto the soaps on tv.

Phil Mitchell (Steve McFadden) who had a lot of enemies was shot in Albert Square in 2001 in an episode of *East Enders*. Later that year 22 million people tuned into the programme to see who had shot him.





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Synopsis of Scenes

The action of the play takes place in
Adelaide's dressing room in a
provincial theatre.

The time - the present

Act 1

- Scene 1 Half an hour before the show
Scene 2 Later that evening

Act 2

- Scene 1 Two days later
Scene 2 Later that afternoon

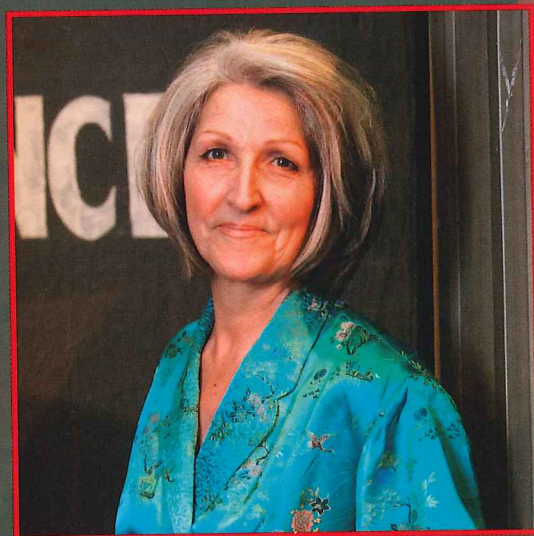
There will be an interval of 20 minutes
between the two Acts.

We recommend that you beat the rush
and pre-order your drinks in the bar prior
to the performance.

Proscenium (Stage)



Adelaide (Addie) Marchbanks
Valerie Pedlar



Mildred (Mille) Pearce
Carole Quirk



Judy Rhodes
Georgina Gillen

ophobia (Fright)

st



Justin James

Iain Robertson



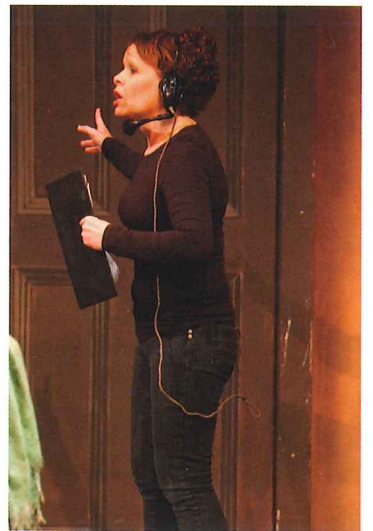
Pearl Palmer

Dyan Ensenat



Edward (Ed) Gibb

Jacky Samuels



Staging

Stage Manager	Pete Beswick
Assistant Stage Manager (Prompt)	Fran Percival
Properties	Sandy Town, Lynn Gosling & Elizabeth Littlejohns
Lighting Design	Syd Coley
Lighting Operator	Poppy Flanagan
Sound Design	Brian Hodge & Roy Carr
Set Design	Michèle Martin
Set Construction	SDC Construction Team
Scenic Artist	Bob Jessamine
Photographs	Fletcherhill Photography
Programme Editor	Jacquie Bolshaw
Programme Content & Research	Henry James
Programme Layout and Design	Mitchell & Wright (Printers) Ltd

Music in this production

Hamlet (the film) - William Walton
Francesca Da Rimini Overture - Tchaikovsky
Night on Bare Mountain - Mussorgsky
Richard III (the film) - William Walton

The Little Theatre - Home of the Southport Dramatic Club.

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- Should you arrive after the performance has started, you will be guided to your seats when a suitable opportunity occurs.
- At the end of the performance, exits will be open at both the front and back of the auditorium.
- First Aid assistance is regularly provided by volunteers from the St. John Ambulance Brigade. Should you require help, please advise our stewards on duty in the Foyer.
- Patrons with hearing impairments should note that the auditorium has an Induction Loop System for your assistance. Hearing wands are also available from our stewards.

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Bettine Manktelow

Bettine Manktelow has been involved in professional and amateur theatre from an early age and she was a repertory actress at fifteen years of age. In 1975, Bettine had her first short story published called *Freddie*, which won a prize in a writer's magazine.

Bettine decided to take up playwriting when she could not find a publisher for her first novel. The first play she wrote (a kitchen-sink drama) which was not published, was performed for ex-pats in Singapore and the audience found it funny. In her plays, since then, she has included comic characters or lines.

In the 1970s while directing for a Ramsgate (Kent) amateur company her career as a playwright took off. Her play, *They Call it Murder*, was performed by a professional company

locally and luckily a representative from the London play publishers, Samuel French, was in the audience and he liked it and agreed for it to be published. After that play was printed, Bettine's works have been performed regularly by amateurs across the country, and all over the world, even as far as Australia.

They Call It Murder is about the elderly character Mr Dalrymple and the question who will receive his money when he dies.

Bettine has written over 20 plays, with the majority of them being printed by Samuel French or Jasper Publishing. *Proscenophobia* (Stage Fright) was first performed in Deal, Kent on March 22, 2001 at the Astor Theatre Arts Centre. It is a who-dunnit set in the dressing-room of a provincial

theatre and is part of a theatrical trilogy along with *Curtain up on Murder* and *Curtain Call*.

The writer also had a novel published called *No Time For Tears* in 2004, which is about two lovers from different classes separated by the First World War. She had a collection of short stories printed in 2008 called *Mostly About Men*.

Bettine has said her writing is influenced by her life experiences and the jobs she has carried out including being an actress, pub landlady and medical secretary. But the characters and plots are, of course, fictitious. She lives in Capelle-Ferne, near Folkestone where she is involved in an amateur dramatic society and she writes and directs plays for them.

Some common symptoms of stage fright:

Dry mouth, tight throat, sweaty hands, cold hands, nausea, erratic pulse, shaking and trembling - *but to mention a few...*

However unpleasant the symptoms of *stagefright* may be it gives the adrenaline a massive surge, sharpens the reflexes, heightens the energy and aids a good performance.



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Brain Teaser - some theatrical superstitions

- Question 1: To say "good luck" might bring bad luck - what might an actor say instead?
a) Black cats, b) Break a leg, c) Take a break.
- Question 2: Which play title is regarded as bad luck if mentioned prior to the start of a production?
- Question 3: How is the play referred to if it must be?
- Question 4: Which of the following actions by actors is considered unlucky?
a) Whispering, b) Whistling, c) Whinging.

Answers to the Brain Teaser on page 19





Alistair Hewitt
Writer & Director

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Summer
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Answers to the Brain Teaser questions: 1 - b, 2 - Macbeth, 3 - The Scottish Play, 4 - b.

Southport Dramatic Club

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