

Company Theatre presents



Joseph Kesselring's melodramatic farce

ARSENIC & OLD LACE



Directed by
Sian Davis

Tickets
\$15 or \$12
for seniors
and students.
Wed-Sat
at 8pm
Matinees
Sun 18th & 25th
at 2pm
Bookings
recommended.

The Rose Centre Theatre
School Road, Belmont
For bookings phone 445 99 00

Nov 17th - Dec 1, 2001

Company Theatre presents



Joseph Kesselring's melodramatic farce

ARSENIC & OLD LACE



Directed by
Sian Davis

The Rose Centre Theatre

Nov 17th - Dec 1, 2001

Arsenic and Old Lace

by Joseph Kesselring

CAST (in order of appearance)

Abby Brewster	:	Dianne Lamont
The Rev. Dr Harper	:	Nicholas Tarling
Teddy Brewster	:	Anthony Whitehouse
Officer Brophy	:	Breton Dukes
Officer Klein	:	Nigel Flockhart
Martha Brewster	:	Shirley Elliott
Elaine Harper	:	Kelly Taylor
Mortimer Brewster	:	John Palmer
Mr Gibbs	:	Mark Higgins
Jonathan Brewster	:	John Clarke
Dr Einstein	:	Graham Wagstaff
Officer O'Hara	:	Andrew Wooding
Lieutenant Rooney	:	Richard Parmee
Mr Witherspoon	:	Vern Pribble

The play takes place in the living room of the Brewster home in Brooklyn in the year 1940.

ACT I Late on an afternoon in October

ACT II Later that same night

INTERVAL

ACT III Scene I Later still that same night
 Scene II Early the next morning

ABOUT THE PLAY

When the 'farce-melodrama' fusion, *Arsenic and Old Lace*, opened in New York on January 10th, 1941, Howard Lindsay told his co-producer, Russel Crouse, "We either have a hit or we'll be run out of town".

They were not run out of town, which would have been the town's loss at any event. So, sixty years on, here we are with another revival (and so well worth the reviving!) as those sweet old ladies, with their penchant for offering terminal relief from loneliness, and their dotty nephews (the one benignly so, the other.....Boris Karloff played him in that first production) walk again!

Although probably best known in its cinema guise, a late 40s vehicle for Cary Grant, Raymond Massey, Peter Lorre and other well-known stars of the time, the director considers the stage version to be superior.

So prepare to be thrilled and tickled in this latest emanation of one of the great comedy classics of all time. And note, it is a play with an appeal for all, er... perhaps not the very young!

THE DIRECTOR

Sian Davis' most recent productions have been "*Eugenia*" (for Company Theatre) and "*One Flesh*" (for Mairangi Players). Less ruggedly confrontational, the challenges for the director in a play like "*Arsenic and Old Lace*" may be different but are no less satisfying to meet; the process has been....as delicious as a refreshing draught of elderberry wine.

PRODUCTION TEAM:

Director	:	Sian Davis
Production Manager	:	Doug Bourke
Stage Manager	:	Sheila Stevens, John Burton
Lighting Designer	:	Simon Thorpe
Lighting/Sound Operators	:	Simon & Tricia Thorpe
Wardrobe Consultant	:	Cathie Sandy
Wardrobe	:	Sue Parmee, Molly Clarke, Bonnie Williams, Lee Conlogue, Cath Louttit, Pauline Barclay, Gail Carran
Hair / Make-up	:	Ruth Quinn, Lianne Hughes
Set Construction	:	Angie Holmes, Phil Davies, Jim Murphy, Tony Sandy Aided by: Mark Higgins John Burton, Anthony Whitehouse, Heather Campbell, Sheila & Bob Stevens, Graham Wagstaff, Owen Marshall, Billy Duncan, Anne Rimmer, Helen Cooper
Set Dresser	:	Glyn Amor
Props	:	Maureen Kenny, Sarah-Jane Burton
Posters	:	Sian Davis, Sherry Ede
Publicity	:	Sherry Ede
Front of House	:	Doug Bourke
Programme	:	Sheila Stevens
Rehearsal Prompt	:	Heather Campbell

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No amateur production could take place without the co-operation of large numbers of individuals and businesses. We would like to say an especially big thank you to the following for their support:

~ Phil Davis & Jim Murphy ~
 ~ Devonport Car Company ~
 ~ Coopers Creek Vineyard ~
 ~ Oscuro Lamps, 23 Wynyard Street, Devonport ~
 ~ Pages Gallery, cnr Williamson Ave & Lake Road, Belmont ~
 ~ North Shore Operatic ~
 ~ Mairangi Players ~

Dianne Lamont : Abby

A professional actress for many years, Dianne's experience has included lead roles in comedy, drama, musicals and several TV performances. Favourite recent roles were Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Helene Hanff in *84 Charing Cross Road*, and for Company theatre, Madame Arcati in Noel Coward's *Blithe Spirit*. Dianne was seen last year in *The Pain and the Passion*, and this is her sixth appearance for Company Theatre.

Nicholas Tarling : Harper

Nicholas Tarling, former professor of history at The University Of Auckland, made his stage debut in 1947 in *Arms and the Man*. Rather more recent roles have included C S Lewis in Howick Little Theatre's *Shadowlands* and Giles in *The Crucible* at the Maidment Theatre. His compilation *Queen Victoria and the Victorians* was presented at the Rose Centre in August. He loves music, but not from others' stereos. He swims at Narrow Neck, but his heart is no longer in jogging.

Anthony Whitehouse : Teddy

Since joining Company Theatre in 1995, Anthony has enjoyed being involved in many Company productions either on or off stage. When he found out that they were casting the role of Teddy, he just knew that he would be the ideal man for the job. So he trimmed his moustache, blew his own trumpet and he's thoroughly enjoyed himself ever since.

Breton Dukes : Brophy

This is Breton's debut in theatre and he is enjoying his time on the beat. Company Theatre is delighted to have him on the boards.

Nigel Flockhart : Klein

Nigel adds New York cop to a list of roles which have included booze-soaked Fleet St journalist, arrogant cricket-playing lawyer, tiresome Norwegian academic, foppish Victorian aristocrat, neurotic Danish prince and a resident of 1940s New Orleans. Preparation has involved eating loads of donuts, practising how to spin a night stick correctly and mastering the phrase "Alright, move it along buddy - Nut-in' ta see hee-re!!!"

Shirley Elliott : Martha

Shirley last appeared for Company Theatre in *The Odd Couple*. She has appeared in many South Island professional theatre productions, also TV and film. She is enjoying the fun in this production.

Kelly Taylor : Elaine

Kelly has a background in musical theatre and has performed in numerous amateur productions around Auckland as a singer and actor. She recently moved behind the scenes to be musical director of the 2000 production of *Charlotte's Web* at the Playhouse Theatre. Branching out again Kelly is thrilled to be given the challenge of performing straight drama.

John Palmer : Mortimer

John has played all sorts of characters, good and bad, over the years for Company. This is the second time he has descended as low as playing a theatre critic, and he hopes that whatever reputation he has will not be irretrievably besmirched.

Mark Higgins : Gibbs

Mark is a relative newcomer to acting although he was active backstage before that. His first time on stage was earlier this year and already he has appeared in 2 Milford Playhouse productions: *The Millionairess* and *Not Quite Alice*. Welcome Mark.

John Clarke : Jonathan

Over the last 10 years John has been seen on TV in *Shortland Street*, *Street Legal*, *Letters to Blanche* and many commercials. His stage experience includes roles in musical theatre in Auckland and Christchurch including a major role in *Perfect Match* at the Herald Theatre. John's last role with Company was in *How the Other Half Loves*.

Graham Wagstaff : Einstein

Graham is a very active thespian: actor, director and committee member, he's done it all. You may have spotted him playing The Squire in Company's *King Arthur*, in more than one production of *Outside Edge* playing entirely different characters, or at the Dolphin in *Cash on Delivery*. He recently directed Shaeffer's *Black Comedy* and Stoppard's *The Real Inspector Hound*.

Andrew Wooding : O'Hara

This is Andrew's first production with Company theatre and his first for 10 years. He was involved with the Globe Theatre in Dunedin for 15 years in the 70s and 80s. He was with the Fortune Youth Company in 1981.

Richard Parmee : Rooney

An Irish American cop from the Bronx by way of New Zealand and born in England. No problem to Richard - he'll do it!

Vern Pribble : Witherspoon

Vern has been a US/NZ dual citizen since 1983. He has been active front and back of stage with Mairangi Players, Torbay Dramatic and Phoenix Theatre, with TV commercials, film, and Hercules.

Shore News, Wednesday 21 November 2001 13

news

Arsenic, old lace, maniacs, alcoholics - it's all there!



CLASSIC COMEDY: Dianne Lamont and Shirley Elliott play Abby and Martha in Company Theatre's production of *Arsenic and Old Lace*.

Question: What do a pair of dotty old ladies, a homicidal maniac and an alcoholic plastic surgeon have in common?

Answer: The Company Theatre's latest production of *Arsenic and Old Lace*.

The American play was written in 1940 and first performed in New York in 1941. The Belmont drama group will perform the play at The Rose Centre from November 17 to December 1.

Company Theatre's director Sian Davis says she decided to bring it to the Shore after a long pause between performances of the grand old classic.

"It hasn't been performed for a while on the North Shore. The last professional production was at the Mercury Theatre in 1974."

Despite the play being over 60 years old Ms Davis does not believe today's audience will have any problems traversing the time barriers.

"In the same way that Shakespeare can be related to, *Arsenic and Old Lace* is a classic."

With a cast of 14 characters the melodramatic farce is based around two extremely sweet old ladies - Abby and Martha - who have a rather unusual penchant for offering terminal relief from loneliness to elderly gentlemen.

"Basically it's about two ladies who bump off lonely old guys and bury them in their cellar."

Main characters also include Jonathan - a homicidal maniac - who is on the run from a mental hospital and Doctor Einstein - an alcoholic plastic surgeon.

Ms Davis says people may remember the classic movie, of the same name, which starred well-known actors Cary Grant and Raymond Massey in the 1940s.

"It's a very well-known play and film."

While it's not the type of play she would normally direct Ms Davis is looking forward to the dramatic comedy. "I think the audience will find it very entertaining."

The production is playing Wednesday to Saturday at 8pm with two matinees on November 18 and 25. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$12 for concession. Book at the Rose Centre phone 445-9900.

Arsenic and Old Lace by Joseph Kellering is
**CLASSIC, AMERICAN COMEDY
FROM THE 1940'S**

**Two Sweet Old
Ladies...
You Better
NOT
Believe It!**

When the melodramatic comedy
“Arsenic and Old Lace” opened in New York on
January 10th, 1941, the producer said

“WE’LL EITHER HAVE A HIT OR
WE’LL BE RUN OUT OF TOWN.”

They were not run out of town and now sixty years
later, another popular revival is to be staged by
Company Theatre, in the Rose Centre, School Road,
Belmont, from Sat November 17th – Dec 1st.

BOOK EARLY – SOME NIGHTS PRESOLD.

Remember the classic movie of the same title,
With Cary Grant, Raymond Massey and other well-known “stars” of the
40’s but to Sian Davis, this director, the stage version is far superior.

The story centers around two extremely sweet old ladies Abby (*Dianne
Lamont*) and Martha (*Shirley Elliot*), who have a rather unusual
penchant for offering terminal relief from loneliness to elderly
gentlemen!

The action of the play is non-stop farce with

- hilarious and unbelievable situations,
 - misunderstandings
 - mistaken identities
- police Inspectors rushing in and out,
 - the local naïve vicar,
 - the beautiful girl next door
- and an unexpected visit from someone like Boris Karloff.

The period of the 1940’s is fastidiously
created in the set, the costumes, make-up and
wigs. It is a play with an appeal for all, but
perhaps not for the very young!

**The production opens Saturday 17th Nov until
December 1st, playing Weds – Saturday at
8pm with two matinees on Sunday 18th and
25th of November at 2.00pm.**

Bookings are recommended through the
Rose Centre on 445.9900

**What type of play is
ARSENIC
AND
OLD LACE?**

It can be classified as
a farce,
a melodrama,
a black comedy,
a thriller
or
a classic period piece
with a frenetic charm!



Thank you!

Siân's thank you card for key helpers.

Classic American comedy from the 1940s

When the melodramatic comedy 'Arsenic and Old Lace' opened in New York on January 10, 1941, the producer said: "We'll either have a hit or we'll be run out of town."

They were not run out of town and now, sixty years later, another popular revival is to be staged by Company Theatre in the Rose Centre, School Road, Belmont, opening this Saturday November 17.

Many people will remember the classic movie of the same title, starring Cary Grant, Raymond Massey and other well-known stars of the 40s but to Sian Davis, director of this production, the stage version is far superior.

The story centres around two extremely sweet old ladies Abby and Martha, who have a rather unusual penchant for offering terminal relief from loneliness to elderly gentlemen.

Abby and Martha (played by experienced, former professional actresses Dianne Lamont and Shirley Elliott) live in a rather creepy old house with their crazy and dotty nephew Teddy, played by Anthony Whitehouse (seen blowing his horn in the photo). Teddy, a wonderfully comic role, continually confuses his identity, believing he is in fact President Roosevelt himself! Teddy

keeps himself extremely busy in the cellar where he says he is "digging the Panama Canal" or is he in fact burying unfortunate victims of the yellow fever?

The action of the play is non-stop farce with hilarious and unbelievable situations, misunderstandings and mistaken identities. There are several Police Inspectors rushing in and out, the local vicar, the beautiful girl next door who is waiting to be married, and an unexpected visit from their other nephew Jonathon, who would easily fit into a modern day horror movie and was played in the 40s by the famous Boris Karloff.

The period of the 1940s is fastidiously created in the set, the costumes, make-up and wigs. It is a play with an appeal for all, but perhaps not for the very young. Director Sian Davis feels that the challenges in directing 'Arsenic and Old Lace' have been "as delicious as a refreshing draught of elderberry wine"! The significance of the elderberry wine will be revealed to those who see the play.

The production opens this Saturday and plays until December 1, playing Wednesday to Saturday at 8pm with two matinees on Sunday November 18 and 25.

Bookings are recommended through the Rose Centre on 445-9900. Some nights are booked out.



BUTTER WOULDN'T MELT: Two sweet old ladies - or are they? Abby (Dianne Lamont) and Martha (Shirley Elliott) from Company Theatre's 'Arsenic and Old Lace'.



CHARGE! Teddy (Anthony Whitehouse) blows his horn, to the confusion of Elaine (Kelly Taylor) and Mortimer (John Palmer).

THE DEVONPORT FLAGSTAFF PAGE 18

NOVEMBER 15 2001

Arsenic and Old Lace at Rose Centre

Two Devonport actresses play leading roles in the 1940s play *Arsenic and Old Lace* Company Theatre's next production.

Dianne Lamont, last seen at Company Theatre as aviator Richard Pearse's mother in *The Pain and the Passion* plays Aunt Abby. And Shirley Elliot, a former professional actress from the Fortune Theatre in Dunedin, last seen for Company in the female version of *The Odd Couple* plays Aunt Martha.

One of the comic roles (of which there are many) is nephew Teddy, played by Anthony Whitehouse, who last year directed *How The Other Half Loves*.

While *Arsenic and Old Lace* is probably best known in its cinema guise, a late 40s vehicle for Cary Grant, Raymond Massey, Peter Lorre and other well known stars of the time, Company Theatre's director Sian Davis says the stage version is far superior.

It moves across genres: farce, melodrama, black comedy, thriller, and a classic period piece.

It centres around two obsessively sweet old ladies Abby and Martha, who are certainly not what they appear to be!

There are many black comedy moments in this play full of zealous police inspectors, naive vicars and Frankenstein-like doctors. It is a story of incredible situations, multiple misunderstandings and mistaken identities. An enjoyable, light-hearted evening is promised.

The show opens this Saturday on November 17, and then runs Weds to Saturday at 8 pm with two Sunday matinees on 18th and November 25 at 2 pm. Book through the Rose Centre on 445 9900.

Two sweet old ladies? Dianne Lamont and Shirley Elliot with Anthony Whitehouse (centre) star in the latest Rose Centre production *Arsenic and Old Lace*.



