

St. Dunstan's doesn't cook with 'Dial M for Murder'

By BARBARA MICHALS

review

"Dial M for Murder" is a classic British thriller, but, despite all the right ingredients, the current production by St. Dunstan's Guild of Cranbrook only simmers when it needs to boil.

The cast is competent but somehow lacks the polish that usually distinguishes St. Dunstan's productions. Director George Ryder's pacing seems a bit sluggish, particularly in the first act. Later acts also contain some uncomfortably long pauses that hamper rather than heighten tension.

The Frederick Knott mystery is sufficiently convoluted and intriguing. When jealous husband Tony Wendice (Ron Wheeler) learns that his wealthy wife Margot (Barbara Elpern) has been unfaithful, his thoughts turn to murder.

After his first clever plan fails, he quickly improvises a more diabolical alternative scheme, but unexpected twists prove once again that even the best-laid plans often do go astray.

BARBARA ELPERN does a nice job as Margot, earnestly contrite after her one infidelity, but apparently doomed to pay with her life. Ms. Elpern's Margot maintains her cool British exterior throughout the ordeal, a kind of Alice-in-Wonderland response to the horrible events that envelop her.

As Tony, Ron Wheeler is a suave villain, though he's not quite as convincing when he masquerades as a loving,

concerned husband. Wheeler makes effective use of facial expressions, and there's an iciness to his malice that adds credibility to the plot.

Paul Geiger portrays Max, the American mystery writer who was formerly Margot's lover. Geiger seems a bit stiff and ill at ease in the role, more a plodder than a plotter.

Lesgate, the hired killer, is played convincingly by Fran Loud. Despite the many shady dealings in his past, Lesgate's ineffective personality is the perfect counterpoint to his ineffective murder attempt. Loud's understating works well.

Charley's Crab worker wins in oyster trials

Michigan will be represented in the 1980 national oyster shucking championships at Leonardtown, Md., by 19-year-old Michael Beasley of Davisburg. Beasley, an oyster shucker at Charley's Crab restaurant in Troy, beat out two other finalists in a recent event at Hotel Pontchartrain, Detroit.

Beasley shucked nine oysters in one minute to beat Patrick Beach of Fogo's restaurant, Detroit; Matt Tomorsky of Real Seafood Co., Ann Arbor; and Dave

Binder of Charley's Crab in Troy. Beasley will receive a free trip to Leonardtown in October for the finals, compliment of the State of Maryland.

WORLD CHAMPION oyster shucker (12 a minute), Cornelius Mackall of Maryland, was chief judge for the event at Charley's Raw Bar & Seafood Restaurant in the Pontchartrain.

A novice event was won by Herbert Strack of Birmingham, who shucked three oyster in a minute. He won dinner-for-two at Top of the Pontch.

Mime starring in show at Birmingham library

February is the month for lovers of mime.

Pat Judd, seasoned Michigan mime artist, will be the star attraction at a Valentine Day program at 7 p.m.

Thursday, Feb. 14, in the Jeanne Lloyd Room, at Baldwin Library in Birmingham.

Ms. Judd teaches at the Midwest Dance Center, does workshops in

schools and has six years of solid performing behind her. She has appeared on Channel 2's "Good Morning Detroit," Channel 4's "This Morning" show, and Channel 56's "College of Lifelong Learning" Series.

Ms. Judd has done classic repertory, mime and improvisations at Meadow Brook Music Festival, Orchestra Hall and Michigan Art Train. She performed with the Pacific Wind Quintet at Somerset Mall last summer and last Thanksgiving.

Despite her art, Ms. Judd is a highly verbal young woman; she graduated with English honors from Oakland University.

"CONTROL AND story telling possibilities are what attracted me to mime," Ms. Judd says. She studied with Tom Aston, director of the Mime Ensemble Association at OU, and James Tompkins at the Drama Studio, London.

"I'm indebted to my teachers," Ms. Judd says, "but I always wanted to mimic. I think early American TV shows — Red Skelton, Clarabel the Cow — influenced me more than anything else."

The free program is for the whole family, but recommended for children 5 and up. Baldwin Library is at 351 Martin. For more information, call 647-1700.

People who miss the Feb. 14 program can catch Pat Judd's act at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 28, at Bloomfield Township Public Library in the Green Room. Bloomfield Township Public Library is at 1099 Lone Pine in Bloomfield Hills. For information, call 642-5800.



Pat Judd, mime, will perform at Baldwin Library on St. Valentine's Day.

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