

# 'Go Back for Murder' challenges the mind

Performances of the Meadow Brook Theatre production of "Go Back for Murder" by Agatha Christie continue through Sunday, May 17, on the Oakland University campus in Rochester Hills. For ticket information, call 377-3300.

By Cathie Breidenbach  
special writer

Meadow Brook's production of Agatha Christie's "Go Back for Murder" focuses on the meat of the mystery and gives the audience what it came for — a good mental workout. Motives in the gamut of passions in the six suspects who were on hand when Amyas Crale was poisoned in the late 1930s. Crale's wife was convicted of the crime. Before her death in prison, she wrote a letter to her daughter, Carla, insisting on her innocence.

The play opens in the early 1950s with Carla, now grown, on the trail of the truth. Dona Werner, with her lilting ladylike voice, makes a slough whose innocent youthfulness lulls suspects into revealing passionate motives still smoldering after nearly 20 years.

She enlists the help of Justin Fogg (Peter Gregory Thompson), a young solicitor whose father defended her mother. Like cheerfulness first thing in the morning, either, you like Fogg's bushy-tailed tenor voice or you don't. Carla does, or she likes something about his long-limbed good looks and willingness to help clear her mother's name.

HER TEXAS fiancé (Gary Andrews), the walking embodiment of the ugly American, tries to order her around, but she won't be manipulated.

Carla visits all five suspects in Act I and uncovers their motives — jealousy, vengeance, hate, love, lust and greed — the gamut — in varied combinations. Meridith Blake (Robert Grossman), the next-door neighbor, seems a dear, doting man, but he puts his innocence in question when he reveals he carried a torch for Caroline and also grows hemlock, the poison that killed Amyas. His brother (George Gatto) was jilted by Caroline years ago in favor of Amyas. The wound still festers.

Bethany Carpenter is fire and ice as the jaded but still attractive Lady



Peter Gregory Thompson and Dona Werner are Justin Fogg and Carla, who try to find out who poisoned her father many years ago, in "Go Back for Murder" at Meadow Brook Theatre.

Melksham who fell fiercely in love with Amyas when she posed for him just before he died.

Miss Williams, the governess, loved Caroline and vehemently disapproved of Amyas' philandering ways. The elegant Jillian Lindig undergoes a transformation to become Miss Williams, a stereotypical pick-up-prim spinster wearing a bun.

Finally, young Angela Warren lived with the Crales and was mightily put out when Amyas insisted she

go off to school. Tyne Turner as Angela convincingly portrays the accomplished woman Angela is in the '50s and the angry teenager she was on the day Amyas died.

The Meadow Brook cast carries off the mystery splendidly, aided by set designer Peter Hicks who creates five smoothly functional mini-sets to give background and substance to character.

DIRECTOR Terence Kilburn

keeps suspicions shifting like the swing of a crooked pendulum. Act II brings the re-creation of the crime that took place at the country estate called Alderbury. Ivy runs rampant on the terrace of the old house where Amyas Crale painted his last portrait.

In an open-necked cossack shirt, James Anthony radiates the strong-minded virility that made him the object of love and hate — one fatal case of hate.



Cathie Breidenbach

Cathie Breidenbach of West Bloomfield has always loved theater. A former high-school English teacher, she works in public relations, advertising and as a freelance writer.

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