

Play review: Agatha Christie drifts along in Players' 'Murder on the Nile'

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FISH CREEK — Peninsula Players Theatre delves into the mystique of Agatha Christie, queen mum of the whodunit, in her once-intriguing “Murder on the Nile.”

It’s a good production. Behind the enticing title are the well-worn Christie promises of quirky characters up to quaint behavior and deadly shenanigans in an exotic locale.

Director Kimberly Senior, cast and creative team put effort into atmosphere. At the start, there’s chaotic bustle of a port as passengers arrive for what turns out to be a deadly cruise along the Nile River.

It’s 1948, and the well-off characters dress to the nines for that time.

Christie skewers the elite as the story slowly evolves and finally breaks into action around a mystery: Who killed a solitary person when every potential culprit is accounted for?

Contemporary playgoers should keep in mind that this is an older play, and it has the Christie trait of a long build-up (and the aggravation of a trick that will be pulled). Audiences are supposed to sit back and savor the shaping of the characters, brick by brick. The performers do this meticulously and with zest, except that some their accents are mushy despite the use of head microphones.

Coloring the proceedings are a world-wise cleric (Tim Monsion), a celebrity-type honeymooning couple (Brandon Dahlquist and Ericka Mac), their servant (Callie Johnson), a scorned fiancé (Karen Janes Woditsch), a traveler and wag (Paul Slade Smith), a doctor with a gripe (Tom Mula) and a prickly pain in the rear (Carmen Roman) and her put-upon niece (Erin Noel Grennan).

Audiences must fight current meanings associated with Egypt and think of the place as it once was. That’s usually how allure goes in the mind – once was.

The imagination is stroked by Middle Eastern music, river cliffs and temple scenes in the background and pushy port-side trinket sellers. They add spice of a Christie fashion.

Karen Janes Woditsch and Tim Monsion are featured in Peninsula Players Theatre's production of 'Murder on the Nile.'

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Peninsula Players Theatre:
“Agatha Christie’s *Murder on the Nile*”: Through Sept. 2: 8 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 7:30 p.m. Aug. 19, 26, 4 p.m. Sept. 2 at Theatre-in-a-Garden, three miles south of Fish Creek. Running time two hours, 25 minutes. \$33-\$39. (920) 868-3287.

★ ★ ★ out of 4