

Sharon Playhouse, Sharon, CT

Shear Madness, by Paul Pörtner. Directed by Bruce Jordan. Re4viewed by J. Peter Bergman.

“A haircut to dye for.”

For pure, unadulterated theatrical silliness you cannot beat Paul Pörtner’s play, “Shear Madness” now playing at the Sharon Playhouse in Sharon, Connecticut. Having been seen by over 13.4 million people I am surprised that this is my first exposure to it. The theatre trade paper, *Variety*, has called it a “Legitimate Phenomenon.” The show first opened in Boston in 1980 and only closed in 2020 due to the Covid pandemic. At one time there were thirteen simultaneous productions and two touring companies. Its popularity is due, in no small part, to its audience participation, three segments of the show in which audience members are encouraged to get into the action of the piece and play detective.

It is a murder mystery set in Tony’s beauty salon/barber shop, *Shear Madness*, in a building where the shop’s owner lives on the third floor and a famous classical pianist lives on the floor between him and the shop. Like every classic farce the shop set has three doors and Karla Woodworth’s complex set provides them all.



Gil Brady, Will Nash Broyles, Michael Kevin Baldwin, Patrick Noonan, Soneka Anderson, Sandy York; Photo: Marlena Aakjar.

The plot is a simple one: at some point in the first act each person but one leaves the shop and during that half hour a murder is committed. Each character has a motive and each of them has an opportunity. Whodunit? Who indeed! The police officer in charge, played with agility by Patrick Noonan, gets into his professional mode and takes on the case. Noonan is very good at his job and as Nick he pulls together a bunch of probable cases. One that didn’t present itself on

opening night was his own probable scenario, but perhaps this will come up on the night you see the show. The play is written to allow the town where you see it to become the setting for the



Michael Kevin Baldwin, Will Nash Broyles;
Photo: Marlena Aakjar.

play so local references to spots in town and the people who live and work there to be used for good comic notice. In Sharon the talk about not just that town, but also many sports in nearby Berkshire County as well. This adds to the humor of the piece.

Michael Kevin Baldwin plays Tony, a very gay stylist who washes hair, preps a shave and keeps everyone, male or female, on their toes. He begins the play about five minutes before the show actually begins and you don't want to miss a moment of his performance, so get to your seat early.

As his manicurist/stylist, Barbara, Soneka Anderson plays a major role in the plot and investigation. She is delightful in this part, soft but aggressive, willful but compliant. Her client, Mrs. Shubert is well portrayed by Sandy York who brings a new meaning to judgmental. Mikey, whose haircut is a ruse, is very well played by Will Nash Broyles who understands comedy reaction very well. In the least funny role in the play he achieves humor with his excellent timing.

And then there's Eddie. Gil Brady plays this enigmatic character to perfection. Whether he is a simple antiques dealer, or a lover, or a blackmailer, or simply a wrong man in the wrong place at the wrong time is for you to decide. Brady does very well with every possibility.

This is laugh-out-loud comedy in a Christie-like semi-melodrama. It's a show that no one can escape without getting involved. I heartily recommend it to one and all.

+ 08/28/2022 +

Shear Madness plays at the Sharon Playhouse, Sharon, CT through September 11. For information and tickets call 860-364-7469 or go on line to: www.SharonPlayhouse.org.



Gil Brady, Michael Kevin Baldwin, Will Nash Broyles,
Soneka Anderson; Photo: Marlena Aakjar.

