



Friday, October 12, 2001

## MBT presents Agatha Christie play

A devilishly exotic tale by the mistress of mystery will unfold Oct. 17 through Nov. 11 at **Meadow Brook Theatre** when Michigan's largest professional theatre company presents Agatha Christie's "Murder on the Nile."

Distinguished by the glamorous settings, intricate plot and colorful characters that are the hallmark of Agatha Christie, "Murder on the Nile" takes place aboard a steamer cruising the historic waterway. After a mysterious murder, an unassuming minister becomes the self-appointed sleuth. The story mirrors the twists and turns of the celebrated river. Suspects include an imperious dowager and her young niece, an English lord traveling incognito, a mysterious doctor, an heiress honeymooning while followed by her husband's former fiancée, and a French maid.

OU alum Lavinia Moyer returns to **Meadow Brook Theatre** to direct the production, nearly 26 years after turning down a part on MBT's stage. A 1975 graduate of Oakland University's Academy of Dramatic Art, she bowed out of a Shakespearean comedy due to impending motherhood. Moyer is recognized as founder and artistic director of the Attic Theatre. The award-winning director currently teaches at Wayne State University's Department of Theatre.

Thrilled to bring Agatha Christie to the **Meadow Brook Theatre** stage, Moyer visualized the mystery from the audience's perspective.

"If you're one who likes to play the sleuth, watching a Agatha Christie plot unfold is great fun," Moyer said. "In theatre, time is compressed. Every minute is intense in its own level of revelation. You have real people on stage playing characters who are coping with tremendous desires and issues and they make mistakes for all to see. If it's working, the audience will be as surprised and shocked as the characters on stage. And they both learn together."

"Murder on the Nile" has been enjoyed in numerous forms and formats across the world, as have so many of Christie's novels, stories and plays. The work was penned in 1937 and originally titled, "Death on the Nile." It was produced in London under that name in 1946 and in New York the same year under the name "Hidden Horizon." The story was produced as a feature film in 1978, starring Peter Ustinov.

The cast of "Murder on the Nile" includes faces familiar to many Detroit theatre patrons. Dr. Art Beer is a staple of Detroit's arts community as both an actor, director and professor of theatre at University of Detroit. In this production, he plays a detective, marking the second time in nearly two decades that he will be directed by friend and colleague Moyer and both times as a sleuth. John Breidenbach returns to MBT after his role in another MBR mystery, "Dangerous Obsession." Audiences will recall Nicole Katovich from last season's acclaimed "The Diary of Anne Frank." Both Thomas Mahard and Lynnae Lehfeldt played in MBT's world premiere production, "Killing Time." Shannon Locke also has delighted audiences, performing MBT's "A Christmas Carol."

Trudy Mason has played on stages throughout metro Detroit as well as repertory theatres across the nation. Erik Gratton studied under Moyer when he received his M.F.A. at Wayne State University. Cat Shoemaker has played numerous roles on the stage of WSU's Hilberry Theatre. Abdul Amir Al Mashkur has participated in many productions in the Detroit area as a member of the Arab Theatrical Artists Guild and the House of Arabic Culture.

Costumes for the production are designed by Edith Leavis Bookstein. Special attention to the historical hues of the period will be reflected in the rich tones and lines. The many dialects of the international case are under honed by the talented dialect coach Cynthia Blaise.

Tickets for "Murder on the Nile" and subscription tickets for the **2001-02 Meadow Brook Theatre season** are on sale at the MBT Box Office or by calling (248) 377-3300. New this season are "Couples Night" discounts on Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday evenings, which offer couples a special buy one ticket - get a second ticket at half price. Group tickets are available by calling (248) 370-3316.

### SUMMARY

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