



Friday, October 11, 2002

MBT opens season with Agatha Christie play

A masterpiece of suspense will keep audiences guessing until the final curtain when Agatha Christie's "Witness for the Prosecution" opens Wednesday, Oct. 16, at **Meadow Brook Theatre**. Running through Nov. 10, the classic courtroom drama inaugurates the 37th season for Michigan's largest professional theatre company.

The setting for the classic courtroom mystery is the capital trial of Leonard Vole, a likeable fellow of modest means and great ambitions. He stands accused of murdering one of his admirers, a wealthy and generous spinster. Among much damning evidence is her will, which names him heir to her estate. The only witness in Vole's defense is his mysterious wife, whose testimony may ruin more than their marriage.

Debra Wicks directs "Witness for the Prosecution," her first production as the newly appointed artistic director of Meadow Brook Theatre. Wicks directed last season's MBT productions of "Bee luther hatchee" and "Godspell." She has worked nationally and internationally for more than 20 years as an actor, director and educator.

The MBT production stars Dennis Robertson as Sir Wilfred. This is Robertson's third MBT production, also having starred in Arthur Miller's "All My Sons" and "A Christmas Carol." Winner of the Detroit Free Press award for Best Actor for his role in "All My Sons," he has performed with the Oregon Shakespeare Company for the last decade as well as on great American stages including the Seattle Repertory Theatre, Theatre 40, South Coast Repertory and La Miranda Civic Theatre. He also is recognized for his many and varied roles in film and on television programs including "M*A*S*H," "L.A. Law," "Mary Tyler Moore," "Cheers" and as a regular on "Young Dr. Kildaire." This is Robertson's second production directed by Debra Wicks.

Robertson is joined by a dozen MBT veterans, including John Biedenbach, Joey Bybee, Barbara Coven-Ellis, Scott Crownover, Judy Dery, Erik Gratton, Mark Hammell, Paul Hopper, Nicole Katovich, Thomas D. Mahard, Leo McNamara and Sara Catheryn Wolf.

Biedenbach performed in MBT's "A Christmas Carol" as young Scrooge. He also appeared in "Dangerous Obsession," "Angels in America" and "Three Tall Women."

Bybee, a recent graduate of Oakland University, was seen in last spring's popular "Godspell."

Coven-Ellis also has played in MBT's "A Christmas Carol" and appeared in "Private Lives" and Agatha Christie's "Ten Little Indians."

Crownover played Jesus in MBT's "Godspell," in "A Christmas Carol" for several years and has appeared in "All My Sons," "Merry Wives of Windsor" and "The Rocky Horror Show." He received the Actor of the Year award from Spring Arbor College.

Dery returns to MBT after playing at the Marquis Theatre, Mark Two Dinner Theatre and Detroit Repertory Theatre, among others. She also appeared in the film "Polish Wedding," which was shot on location in Metro Detroit.

Gratton is a Hilberry Theatre alumnus. He performed in "Godspell" at MBT as well as the Heart of America Shakespeare Festival and the Maine Shakespeare Festival.

Hammell played in MBT's "A Christmas Carol," the musical "Tintypes" and on the stage of several theatres throughout the Detroit area.

Hopper has been busy at both the Purple Rose Theatre and the Gem Theatres. He last appeared at MBT in "The Rocky Horror Show."

Katovich played in MBT's "The Diary of Anne Frank" and "Murder on the Nile" and has performed with the Oliverian Theatre, Fir Acres Theatre and Portland Shakespeare Festival.

Mahard is a familiar presence to both MBT audiences and theatre students. He has appeared in "A Christmas Carol," Agatha Christie's "Murder on the Nile" and the lead in MBT's world premiere of "Killing Time."

McNamara, a Fulbright Scholar and retired faculty member of the University of Michigan, performed in MBT's "The Merry Wives

of Windsor.” He also has appeared in shows at the Boarshead Theatre, The Attic, Performance Network and Purple Rose.

Catheryn Wolf played in “The Lion In Winter” and “A Christmas Carol” at MBT. She also has worked with the Jewish Ensemble Theatre, Hilberry Repertory Theatre and the Macomb Center for the Performing Arts.

Several performers in Witness for the Prosecution are new to the MBT stage. They are Cameron Knight, Kimberly Lucius, Travis Walter and Kristopher Yoder.

Knight has played the stage at University of Michigan-Flint, the Flint Youth Theatre, Michigan Shakespeare Festival and the Lexington Children’s Theatre.

Lucius graduated from Oakland University and has studied at The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London.

Walter is a recent graduate of Oakland University, where he directed “Hey There Good Times” and “Sorry, Wrong Number” as well as acted in numerous productions.

Yoder, a graduate of the MFA program at Wayne State University, played in many shows at the Hilberry Theatre. He also has played the Allentown College Theatre and the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival.

Tickets for “Witness for the Prosecution” and Meadow Brook Theatre 2002-2003 series subscriptions are on sale at the MBT Box Office or by calling (248) 377-3300. Group tickets are available at (248) 370-3316. For more information visit the **Meadow Brook Theatre** Web site.

Meadow Brook Theatre is supported by the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts. Promotional support for the 2002–2003 season is from the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

SUMMARY

A masterpiece of suspense will keep audiences guessing until the final curtain when Agatha Christie’s “Witness for the Prosecution” opens Wednesday, Oct. 16, at Meadow Brook Theatre. Running through Nov. 10, the classic courtroom drama inaugurates the 37th season for Michigan’s largest professional theatre company.

Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Friday, October 11, 2002

Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Friday, October 11, 2002

Article Start Date: Thursday, October 23, 2003