

WISCONSIN THEATER SPOTLIGHT

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SHERLOCK HOLMES MAKES A MERRY MYSTERY AT THE BRUMDER MANSION



Cast members of Milwaukee Entertainment Group's "Sherlock Holmes and the Christmas Goose" are, from left, back, Jonathon Gideon, Chris Goode, Josh Scheibe, Jake Konrath, middle, Leslie Fitzwater, Dana Strothenke, Gladys Chmiel, front, James laquita.

BY MARILYN JOZWIK

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One might not think of Sherlock Holmes in conjunction with Christmas. Yet, there is quite the festive atmosphere surrounding “Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Christmas Goose,” adapted by Michael Menendian and John Weagly, being presented by Milwaukee Entertainment Group in Milwaukee’s 1910 Brumder Mansion basement theater. Set in Victorian England, the show has a cast of intriguing British-accented characters taking Holmes, literally, on a wild goose chase.

This tidy little mystery, wrapped up in a little more than an hour, opens with Holmes (Chris Goode) and Dr. Watson (Josh Scheibe) in Holmes’s home discussing a felt hat left by a man who was accosted by a couple of street youths trying to steal the big Christmas goose he was carrying. The man fled the attack, leaving his hat and goose behind, and the would-be thieves ran off without the goose when their plan was foiled.

Holmes is tasked with finding the owner of the items and, with his usual spot-on observations, he determines the many traits of the man simply by examining his felt derby. Not wanting to waste a fine piece of poultry, Holmes prepares to cook the goose but finds in its throat a large blue gemstone – which turns out to be the

blue carbuncle of the Countess of Morcar that was recently stolen from her bedroom.

The mystery sends the famous crime-solving duo through the streets of London, putting together the puzzle, piece by delicious piece.

The show, directed by Amanda Hull, starts with the fine casting of Goode as Holmes and Scheibe as Watson. Goode has the focused gaze and confident air and arrogance of the great detective, while Scheibe is the practical Watson whose boss never ceases to amaze him. They are a fine pairing, setting the stage for the many interesting characters they meet en route to solving the crime – a plumber, pub owner, goose farmer and many others. These are the spices in this tasty holiday concoction.

Besides Goode and Scheibe, the cast includes six performers who help make every scene sparkle with the charm of Victorian England at Christmastime. With convincing British accents (Raeleen McMillion serves as dialect coach), the players seamlessly move all over the basement theater at the Brumder Mansion, effectively creating all sorts of characters in various settings– a street in London, a pub, the bathroom at the Countess's home – even a goose farm! With their fine characterizations and energy, each scene comes to life.

Among the performers are three area veterans who lend their considerable skills to this fine piece, having various roles as well as appearing as Carolers and Players. Gladys Chmiel always adds a gesture or look, plus her distinctive resonant voice, to give her characters – in this case Holmes’s housekeeper and a pub owner – a sense of whimsy, while Leslie Fitzwater is wonderful as the goose purveyor who spars with Holmes for information. James P. Iaquinta also has a fine turn as Mr. Baker, the owner of the derby, and a judge.

Jonathon Gideon, Dana Strothenke and Jake Konrath also donned several hats for Carolers, Players and other roles. I much enjoyed Gideon as the goofy plumber in the well-played scene at the Countess’s bathroom, Strothenke as the Cockney-accented goose farmer and Konrath who tidied up the piece nicely at the end.

An added bonus to the show is the performance of Gideon, Strothenke, Konrath and Fitzwater singing Christmas carols in their Victorian period costumes on the steps in the foyer of the Brumder Mansion before the show and then finishing up their set on stage. Their lovely four-part harmonies of many well-known carols provide a festive segue into the show where they also appear as Carolers, in an opening remindful of “A Christmas Carol.”

IF YOU GO:

Who: Milwaukee Entertainment Group

What: "Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Christmas Goose"

When: Through Dec. 21

Where: Brumder Mansion, 3046 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee

Info/Tickets:
milwaukeeentertainmentgroup.com

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VOICES FOUND
ARTICULATES
SHAKESPEARE'S 'HENRY V'
WITH A DEFT HAND



SHERLOCK HOLMES MAKES
A MERRY MYSTERY AT
BRUMDER MANSION



WCT'S 'ELF' FINDS A
DELIGHTFUL BUDDY

MURDER IS A FESTIVE AFFAIR
IN SUNSET'S 'THE GAME'S
AFOOT'

NEXT ACT'S NEIL SIMON
COMEDY RETURNS TO
WRITERS' BYGONE ERA

SHAKESPEARE'S WEIGHTY
SUBJECTS GET LIGHT