

An interactive murder mystery that entertains

Audience, cast exchange lines in 'Murder is a Fine Art'

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MILWAUKEE — Prepare yourself for a slightly different theatrical experience as Brumder Mansion closes down its production of "Murder Is a Fine Art." As you enter you are invited to partake of some delicious appetizers in the lovely dining room. One can stroll around the main floor enjoying the goodies and the lush environment of this historic estate.

Actors who will later participate in telling the story are intermingling with guests. All have gathered together to view the unveiling of Pete Casso's latest masterpiece, "A Black Cat at Midnight." His previous big hit was his "White Cat in the Snow." Already one senses that we're in for some tongue-in-cheek entertainment.

Suddenly, an argument erupts between Libby LaBelle, an art critic who has come to review Casso's newest creation, and the event planner, Sharon Sharalike. In a manner of minutes, amidst a flurry of activity, the critic collapses and is rushed to the nearest hospital.

As soon as we have all proceeded to the theater downstairs, the security guard announces that LaBelle has died of poisoning and a small puncture to her thigh.

The small cast of six characters seats itself on stage while the guard remains standing to act as narrator. After hearing of the experiences that each character has had with the victim, we are asked to help solve the murder. Who

At a glance

"Murder is a Fine Art"

The play is at 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday in the Brumder Mansion, 3104 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee. Call 414-388-9104 or visit www.brumdermansion.com.

killed LaBelle and why?

In the process we meet Casso, the acclaimed artist; Fiona Fakes, a budding artist ruined by one of LaBelle's reviews; Sharon Sharalike, the event planner; Luigi, the chef; Brett Cutler, a former lover of LaBelle; Lilac (Candy), Libby's cousin, and the security guard, who remains nameless.

We discover that all had motive for murder because they had all been the victims of LaBelle's acerbic critiques, with the exception of Brett, who made her suffer by ending their relationship and turning his affections toward Lilac. So there's no love lost there either.

Each character has a distinct personality, and there's a lot of humor in the personal stories each tells, along with the comments made by us as we ask questions and give our reasons for our choice of the guilty party.

This is a very interactive event, and not all the humor is supplied by the actors.

All the actors are intriguing to watch, but the standouts are Tom Jenkins as Luigi, Hugh Blewett as Casso, Corey Jefferson Hagen as Brett, and, earning the gold star, Keighley Sadler as Libby and Lilac LaBelle.

Written by Jack Pachuta, who also played security guard, and directed by Tom Marks, "Murder Is a Fine Art," produced by the Milwaukee Entertainment Group, proves to be both entertaining and mysterious.