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Review: Williamston Theater's 'Murder for Two' hysterically inventive

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Williamston Theater is concluding its season with a show that is sure to be a big fat hit.

"Murder for Two" is a hysterical send up of Agatha Christie mysteries starring two actors who provide piano accompaniment to their own singing with 90 minutes of laughter, fast-paced sight gags and delightfully clever songs.

How can you not like it?

The action opens on a beautiful and imaginatively conceived rendition of a fancy living room (Bartley H Bauer, set designer) of a rich guy named Arthur Whitney.

Poor Mr. Whitney has met his maker in his living room with a bullet hole in his forehead, right in front of the grand piano.

We meet his strange wife, who seems more upset over her missing ice cream than the death of her husband. But there seem to be lots of other suspects to this heinous crime: a German psychiatrist, a flirty French ballet dancer, a group of young boys, a New York husband and wife and a college student.

The trick here is that one actor, Andrea Wollenberg (new to Williamston), plays all the parts.

You can't take your eyes off of her for the entire play. She slides in and out of accents, genders, and personalities with ease. In the part of the wife, the multi-talented actress even creates an amazing voice tremor.

The pace of the play never slows as Wollenberg nimbly moves all over the stage with grace, dances, plays piano and of course, sings.

But she doesn't do this magic act alone.

Just as deft (although with a more limited role) is Mark Schenfisch as the young investigator who is posing as a real detective. In fact, he may be a better and more confident pianist than his on-stage partner.

As Marcus Moscovicz, Schenfisch is trying hard to prove to all of the suspects that he is an able detective, but it turns out that he might also be a suspect.

Ah, the plot thickens!

Both actors bounce off each other with one-liners, physical humor, gags, songs - all with perfect timing. They enhance each other's performances.

"Murder", written with amazing wit by Joe Kinosian and Kellen Blair, was premiered in 2011. The musical mystery enjoyed a long run off-Broadway and has been playing regional stages all across the US.

Although I don't know where other theater companies are finding actors who can dance, sing and play piano as well as Schenfisch and Wallenberg do at Williamston. In fact, I don't recall ever seeing a musical where the singers provide their own music.

Our two actors are full of spark and energy, but the direction by Rob Roznowski can only be described as brilliant. You can see that a play like this offers lots of freedom to the director.

Roznowski uses the entire Williamston Theater and packs the set and the action with ingenious methods to keep our attention and enrich the plot. Since there is no choreographer listed, he must also perform those duties.

Clearly, "Murder for Two" at Williamston is a theatrical confection that was the result of many great creative minds. It's a play that takes old and familiar plot lines, but shakes them up with originality and music.

Don't miss it.