

Sun Lakes Playhouse Presents A Comedic 'Who Dunit'

BY ANITA LAWRENCE, Sun Lakes Life Nov 4, 2021



The Sun Lakes Playhouse presented the **Magnificent Mystery Mansion** at three sold out performances on Oct. 29, 30 and at a matinee on Oct. 31 in the Main Clubhouse Ballroom. Staging for the performance was unlike what we normally associate with theater performances. The actors and sets for staging this mystery play were performed on the ballroom floor rather than on stage.

The very eccentric Magnificent family, Milton Magnificent (John Hasha) is an art collector and millionaire, while the bizarre Muffin Magnificent (Barbara Searcy) collects “hair.” Son, Melvin Magnificent (Ernie Normand) is the only normal member of the family and crazy Uncle Mortimer (Bob Bergan) who likes to talk a lot invited several of their close friends for dinner and the unveiling of Milton’s newest painting.

Benjamin, the Indian Butler (George Meldrum) faithfully and cheerfully serves the Magnificent family serving up his own brand of humor with his uncanny use of English phrases that aren’t quite grammatically correct but wonderfully humorous.

Clicky, the Clock (Dave Huetten) is the spirit of the mansion who lives behind the grandfather clock and knows everything about the crazy bunch living in the Mansion.

One by one their peculiar guests arrive at the Magnificent Mansion that is believed to be haunted. Alec Tricity (Joyce Close), a biker babe whose Harley motorcycle broke down en route to the party, shares a ride to the mansion with Remington Squeal (Joe Shaw) who is quite enamored with his dashing good looks and many talents.

Arriving to the mansion shortly after were Howard Lee Lyon (Tom May) who is afraid of everything along with his wife Dorothy Lyon (Sandra Caton) who may have had an ulterior motive for attending the event with her sleep-inducing cookies.

Last but not least of the guests to arrive is the proper and obnoxious widow Mrs. Priscilla Persimmon (Sherry Pritikin) and her two daughters Princess Persimmon (Ramona Lott) the beautiful blonde and snooty favorite daughter and her sister Patricia Persimmon (Ronda James) who is a bit of a klutz and plays second fiddle to her favored sister.

After dinner, Milton’s new original piece of art was unveiled for the assembled guests who quickly learn that they must spend the night after a storm washed out the bridge leading to the mansion.

After Dorothy shared her sleep-inducing poppy seed cookies, the thief takes advantage of the sleeping guests to steal Milton's painting.

Was it the butler or one of the guests? Clicky, the Clock, who raps to a beat, gave the audience clues as to who was the thief.

Early the next morning the group discovers the painting is gone and begin to look at and accuse one another of being the thief. In the end, the very smart Alec Tricity, figures out the mystery and determines that the artful bandit is the one and only crazy Uncle Mortimer.

The play directed by George Meldrum and co-directed by Mary Flynn was a humorous mystery that involved the audience as detectives. Audience members could participate in solving the mystery to win a prize. A prize was also awarded at each performance for the best Halloween costume.

The play was engaging and the actors did a great job portraying their wacky characters despite some of the sound issues with a couple of the microphones on opening night.

Dinner was catered by Johnny Russo's Italian Restaurant and was served during intermission by members of the Sun Lakes Playhouse, which was just another twist on an enjoyable and humorous evening.

