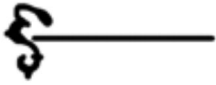


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And Then They Were Done?

T3's "Murder on the Nile" is enjoyable enough, but the real mystery is "Why bother?"
by *Mark Lowry*

Why do American theaters continue to produce plays or plays based on novels by Agatha Christie, especially one as moldy as *Murder on the Nile*? Christie wrote the play from her own novel, *Death on the Nile*. The drama has about half the intrigue of *The Mousetrap* and doesn't have that play's fun little gimmick that keeps audiences coming back for decades.

The primary reason, one can only surmise, is that it's most certainly a hoot for actors to break out the kind of accents that every non-Brit uses when being mockingly uptight. And if the goal is for a director to assemble actors who are brilliant at corncobby types, then good show for Theatre Three director Terry Dobson.

To that end, Dobson wrangles three of the best: Regan Adair, as ladies man and possible gold-digger Simon; J. Brent Alford, as Canon Pennefeather, the uncle of the first-murdered and the character who pieces everything together in the inevitable summary; and Terry



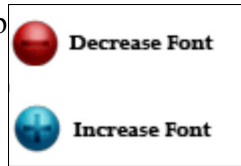
Photo by Ken Birdsell.



SHARE

McCracken, as Miss Ffoliot-Ffoulkes, so blue-b

Henry Higgins look like Eliza's pop.



Even if one—yes, these characters use the generic pronoun "one" a lot—isn't familiar with the Christie mysteries, the recipe is easier than microwave popcorn: Introduction of characters and possible motives, the murder, the finger-pointing and the big reveal.

This time, instead of in some huge manor, it's on a paddle steamer headed down the North African river. In Jac Alder's design, the vessel resembles an Egyptian funeral boat with the lotus design at the stern—appropriate considering the cruiser's named Lotus, and the flower symbolized rebirth after death to ancient Egyptians. With the action happening inside the boat, which is thrust on the diagonal of Theatre Three's square stage, action is limited. Advice for ticketbuyers: Ask to sit on a higher-up row. If one is on or near the floor, the actors might appear legless.

Murder on the Nile

by *Agatha Christie*
Presented By Theatre Three

March 26 - April 26
at Theatre Three
2800 Routh St.
Suite 168
Dallas, TX 75201
214-871-3300

7:30pm Thursday; 8pm Friday; 2 & 8pm Saturday;
2pm Sunday.

Bruce R. Coleman's costumes are, as usual, meticulously rendered, and so gorgeous that if any of these characters fell overboard, one first would rescue the garments from a Nile croc's jaw, and then consider the humans later. Maybe.

The three aforementioned actors are, as expected, great at being veddy British. But two others emerge as standouts: Danielle Pickard, who makes a good case for bad girls as the jealous, trigger-happy girlfriend, Jacqueline de Severac; and Renee Krapff as Christina, the American who might be nagged to death by her double-double-F aunt (McCracken's character). Even in a lightly plotted play where the characters could be rejects from other Christie drafts, this quintet keeps the boat afloat.

Just barely, though. There really isn't enough excitement to sustain two-and-a-half hours. Any longer and we'd be in Titanic-ville.

Theater Jones