



MAY 16 - JULY 20, 2014
THEATRE TOO

Shear Madness



Shear Madness

BY PAUL PÖRTNER

Performance rights for Shear Madness have been arranged through Cranberry Productions, Inc., Marilyn Abrams and Bruce Jordan.

the history of Shear Madness

It all began in the summer of 1976 with a production of *I Do, I Do* at the Lake George Dinner Theatre in Upstate New York. Bruce Jordan, a former high school teacher, was directing the summer stock production. Marilyn Abrams, also a former school teacher whose first love was performing, was acting in the musical. Jordan and Abrams worked well together and quickly became friends. They discovered that they shared a similar sense of humor as well as the same favorite play (Noel Coward's *Private Lives*). Of course, as actors in constant pursuit of work, they also shared a similar lifestyle. When production of *I Do, I Do* ended, their friendship continued.

Later that year, Jordan was working at a theatre in Rochester, New York when he came across a play entitled *Scherenschnitt*, which had been written in 1963 by German writer and psychologist Paul Pörtner. The playwright had written the script to use as a study of how people perceive or misperceive reality. The brief play was set in a uni-sex hair salon and revolved around the off-stage murder of a concert pianist. Subjects were asked to solve the murder based on their individual perceptions of the events and the six stereotypical characters surrounding the murder.

Jordan was intrigued by the concept of the script and suggested that he and Abrams stage the play together in Lake George. Abrams read Pörtner's original script, which she describes as "primitive" and says that if she hadn't known and trusted Jordan as she did, she "would have run for the hills" at the prospect of revising and staging a production of such a work. She did trust him though and they opened the newly titled *Shear Madness* in Lake George in 1978 with nothing more than a basic outline of a script.

The first year that *Shear Madness* played in Lake George it was truly a work in progress with the majority of the show improvised each night. As an ensemble, the cast maintained the action and the characterizations that received a good response from the audience night after night. They also incorporated the actual audience responses into the play. Jordan says that he continues to instruct the

actors to "let the audience win." He explains, "if the audience has something funnier to say or do than the actors, let them. That is the basic magic of the play."

Soon *Shear Madness* developed into a show that changed every time it was performed. The actors followed a basic format and changed the specific lines along the way. Now, decades later, *Shear Madness* incorporates not only the contributions of the audience, but also frequent references to the latest media scandals and local news items. Jordan recalls, "It occurred to me when we started actually performing the play that it would work well as a comedy. Early on, most of the laughs in *Shear Madness* were attained during the times when the audience was actively involved in solving the crimes. And the laughs were derived from the wild and conflicting misperceptions that the audience had."

Thus Pörtner's serious psychodrama became an interactive comedy whodunit. The show evolved, in the presence of an audience, into a raucous comedy that let the audience into the act. When they first opened the show, Jordan and Abrams were in the lead as well as at the helm of the production. Because they were on stage each night, Abrams says they experienced the "magical" chemistry between the actors and the audience. They were acutely aware of the audience's response to *Shear Madness*. Jordan and Abrams then purchased the world, stage, screen, and television rights to the play. Cranberry Productions (as in, they are quick to explain, "What else goes with a turkey") was created to nurture the hit that they knew they had cultivated. With complete financial and artistic control over the show, they now had an enormous project on their hands.

Receiving rave reviews and frequent suggestions from tourists from the Boston area, they decided that *Shear Madness* may work well in Boston. After more than two years honing the comedy, Jordan and Abrams moved their show to Boston. They scheduled a brief run at the historic Charles Playhouse in Boston's Theatre District to begin January 29, 1980.

And the rest, as they say, is history.

-- From the *Shear Madness* web site,
www.shearmadness.com

THIS HAIR-RAISING WHODUNIT IS MADE POSSIBLE BY...

Theatre Three is supported by its Board of Directors, by subscribers, by funds from the City of Dallas Office of Cultural Affairs, The Texas Commission on the Arts, The National Endowment for the Arts, and The Shubert Foundation. Supporters also include TACA. Special in-kind support for Theatre Three's web site is provided by QuickSilver Interactive. Dr. Delphinium is Theatre Three's florist. A major contribution from the estate of Marlene Webb, a longtime subscriber, has established the Theatre Three Endowment Fund in support of the building and its equipment.



THEATRE TOO

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SCENIC PAINTING
Dane Tuttle
CARPENTRY
Aaron Roberts
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
Cat Tignor
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Kat Edwards, Madeleine Morris,
and Cat Tignor.

CAST

NICK O'BRIEN
*Bradley Campbell
MIKEY THOMAS
Matthew Clark
TONY WHITCOMB
*B.J. Cleveland
BARBARA DEMARCO
Sherry Hopkins
EDDIE LAWRENCE
David Meglino
MRS. SCHUBERT
*Gene Raye Price

SCENE SYNOPSIS

PLACE
Shear Madness Salon in Dallas,
Texas
TIME
Today



LEFT TO RIGHT: Gene Raye Price, B.J. Cleveland, Matthew Clark, David Meglino, and Sherry Hopkins. SEATED IN FRONT: Bradley Campbell

Special Thanks to Pamela G. Pierce of Imagique Salon Suites, Salon Pompeo, and David Wilkins.

To learn more about the artistic staff and cast, see more photos and watch videos about the show, visit the *Shear Madness* page on Theatre Three's web site at www.theatre3dallas.com.

Please silence your cell phones and all electronic devices. No photography or videography is allowed without the consent of the theater.

There will be one fifteen minute intermission between the first and second acts.

* indicates members working under Actors' Equity Association contracts in this production.
** indicates a performer enrolled in the AEA membership candidate program.

□ T3 PEOPLE

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For the theatre's 50th Anniversary (2011) Theatre Three's main stage has been named the NORMA YOUNG ARENA STAGE in honor of the theatre's founding artistic director. Ms. Young, a Dallas native, served the theatre as director, leading actress and administrator from the theatre's founding in 1961 until her death in 1998.

Theatre Three thrives on her legacy of artistic and intellectual vigor, her wisdom and her continuous quest for the perfect synthesis of authors, actors and audiences.



This playbill is a publication of Theatre Three, Inc., 2800 Routh Street, Suite 168, Dallas, Texas 75201, 214-871-3300, www.theatre3dallas.com in support of *Shear Madness* (the fourth show of the 2013-2014 Theatre Too Season).

PLAYBILL EDITORS: Jac Alder & Kimberly Richard

PROOFREADER: Adele Acrey ILLUSTRATIONS: Joe Howard

PHOTOGRAPHY: Jeffrey Schmidt & Bruce R. Coleman

DESIGN: David W. Radabaugh

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FINAL SHOW OF THE 2013-2014 SEASON ON THE NORMA YOUNG STAGE

JUN 19 - JUL 13 *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark*

THE 2014-2015 SEASON ON THE NORMA YOUNG ARENA STAGE

AUG 7 - 31 *Candy Barr's Last Dance*

SEPT 25 - OCT 19 *Hands on a Hardbody*

NOV 20 - DEC 14 *Civil War Christmas*

JAN 8 - FEB 8 *Hot Mikado*

MAY 7 - 31 TBA

JUN 25 - JUL 19 *The Liar*

THEATRE TOO

JAN 8 - FEB 15 *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*

FOR TICKETS & INFORMATION

www.theatre3dallas.com or 214-871-3300

Both Theatre Three and Theatre Too have Hearing Assistants devices which may be checked out (without charge) from the box office. These discrete devices enhance the performance experience for audience members with any degree of hearing limitation. The box office personnel can provide you with the devices either before the show or at intermission. Theatre Three's staff and board are most grateful to donors Carolyn Wickwire and Dennis West, who provided the grant that allows us to offer this enhancement to our patrons.

