



Esther Darlington (r) and Sandy Pasco (l) with Nancy Duchaine, in character as the duplicitous Daria Chase, at a performance of *The Game's Afoot* at the Ashcroft HUB. (Photo credit: Nancy Morris)

Live theatre makes welcome return to Ashcroft in ambitious production

Production of 'The Game's Afoot' contained fine performances and lots of laughs

Apr. 18, 2023 7:00 p.m. [COMMUNITYLOCAL NEWS](#)

By Esther Darlington

Spring burst into bloom with the Winding Rivers Arts & Performance Society's first theatre production in three years, *The Game's Afoot* by New York playwright Ken Ludwig. The creative energies of the community had to be put on hold at the start of the pandemic, so it was so good to see the flourishing energy return to Ashcroft in this ambitious production.

The Game's Afoot requires a lot of physical energy, partly due to the set design and very much a part of the ambitious effort to make the play work. There were so many new (to me) names in the cast including Richard

Wright, who played the role of the highly esoteric, more than slightly mad actor William Gillette with robust vigour. Wright gave the role some pause for reflection, however. The confusion and uncertainty came through, and he was clearly inside the character.

Daria Chase, the journalist, was played by Nancy Duchaine, whose past performances in Winding Rivers productions were outstanding. As Daria, Nancy conveyed the hardened veneer of a journalist without a heart, and with some sexual innuendo, more than capably. When the plot has her murdered, the disposal of the body becomes a farce that raised some good laughs. The revolving set on the wall of the mansion certainly bore testimony to the competence and skill of the construction crew.

The role of the female inspector wearing mannish attire was played skillfully by Margaret Moreira, who played the role in an understated but effective way. Madge Geisel (Mavourneen Varcoe-Ryan), the silky slithering sexy wife of Felix, added a touch of irony to an all too common domestic situation of a husband with a roving eye, played by Jan Schmitz.

Paulet Rice played the challenging role of William Gillette's mother effectively. Having a son like William was not an easy role to play. Others in the cast played their roles with keen eyes on character. This is not always the case in amateur plays, when the cast is often taken up more with remembering their lines than they are with feeling the character of the person they are playing.

This brings attention to the projection of voice on stage. All the players in *The Game's Afoot* projected their voices well, which is a challenge in the HUB. Acoustical material on the walls helps enormously, but the skill of voice projection is always a requirement. In this regard, Richard Wright deserves a gold star.

All in all, the first stage play of the year after a long wait for live performances on stage was a very good, necessary bout of laughter.

editorial@accjournal.ca