

# Arts & Entertainment

## Players' murder mysteries fun group amusement

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**  
The Champion

There's nothing quite like a murder to whet one's appetite. When it's all part of the planned dining experience, that is.

Miltonians who have already taken part in one of the Milton Players Theatre Group's Murder Mysteries know what I'm talking about.

For those who don't, murder mysteries put on by the Milton Players allow ordinary citizens to be detectives for a day and put their clue solving abilities to the test.

Although they're not new — they've been put on for about 15 years — they seem to be one of Milton's best kept entertainment secrets.

These interactive shows are put on throughout Milton and the Halton area for various sized groups and corporations for occasions like Christmas.

It's a fundraising venture for the theatre group known for its plays and dinner theatres put on at the Milton Seniors' Activity Centre several times each year.

The murder mysteries are far from your usual play, said Joan Patch, Milton Players' publicity director.

The cast of the interactive murder mystery acts out a script — using a lot of improvisation — and invites the audience

to solve the mystery with the others at their table once the 'murder' has been committed.

"It's a loose script. A lot of it is improvised. It's like, 'At this point you die.' Or, 'At this point, you let people know you've committed adultery with another cast member.' You never know what the audience is going to be like, so it's impossible to stick to the script," said Ms Patch.

Audience members are invited to probe, question and interrogate the cast members, who display their improvisational skills by their on-the-spot responses.

"The cast of characters mingles with the group, and tries to give them clues," Ms Patch said, adding, "A detective will (also) bring out clues and confront characters."

By the time dessert arrives, there are more than a few budding Sherlock Holmes detectives in the audience, she said.

The mysteries aren't particularly difficult to solve, Ms Patch said, and there's almost always at least one group that solves it correctly. However, she said, many people miss the mark because they go off on a wrong tangent, making it more complicated than it really is.

Although Milton Players hasn't done much in the way of personal parties and non-corporate celebrations, Ms Patch said they're open to pretty much anything.

They'll even write a script that's specific to an audience, using people's names from the company or maybe even do a spoof, Ms Patch said.

Otherwise, the group has several murder mystery scripts that have been written over the years by various members.

Ms Patch has participated in four murder mysteries since she joined the group in 1996.

"In the last one I played a lounge singer.



Joan Patch of the Milton Players says people enjoy the group's murder mystery shows.

It was memorable because I got to wear a blonde wig."

She said some of the Milton Players love doing the murder mysteries, while others opt out, preferring to do traditional plays. Ms Patch is the former.

"It's so different from being on stage. It helps to stretch your abilities. I like the creativity that you have to employ on the spot. And it's fun to try playing a character you wouldn't normally play," she said.

People's responses to the shows are almost always positive, she said.

"It's something different for an occasion. They're interactive, fun, entertaining, and something you participate in rather than watch."

Participating groups normally range in size from 35 to about 120, but that's flexible. Rates begin at about \$300.

Individuals or companies interested in hosting a murder mystery can call (905) 875-0629 or e-mail [events@miltonplayers.com](mailto:events@miltonplayers.com).

Stephanie Thiessen can be reached at [sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com](mailto:sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com).

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