

Dark comedy a pleasant change of pace for Players

"You're going to see some fresh faces," the audience was told Friday, opening night of the Milton Players Theatre Group's latest show.

But was that a promise or a threat, I wondered. Change can go either way, after all.

Fortunately, as the next two hours unfolded, I was impressed by how the six actors — all of them new to the Players, except for one — brought Norm Foster's *Sinners* to life at the Milton Seniors' Activity Centre, 500 Childs Dr.

The cast — among 40 newcomers to the group, many behind-the-scenes — added some excitement and unpredictability.

As with most of Norm Foster's plays, this one revolves around cheating partners and identity kerfuffles.

Peter (Ken Mitchell) and the reverend's wife, Monica (Kerry Wright), are having an affair and find themselves in a pickle when Rev. Lloyd returns unexpectedly.

Without giving too much away, Rev. Lloyd ends up dead and the couple soon finds that affairs can be a lot of work.

The scene opens to a black-negligéed Monica, who seductively welcomes a paranoid Peter into her home. He's not in the mood.

"You're having an affair with a married woman, not kidnapping the Pope," she tells him.

With perfect comedic timing he retorts: "I'd rather kidnap the Pope. At least then I wouldn't have to worry about his husband coming home."

Wright is terrific as the sly, manipulative Monica who transforms from a harmless and pouty woman to one who seems capable of anything.

I loved to hate her and was mesmerized by the gamut of expression in her eyes. She was relaxed and natural.

While Mitchell flubbed a few lines, it was opening night, so we were forgiving. And he more than made up for it with his presence on stage, which conveyed the experience of



with STEPHANIE HOUNSELL

Back stage

someone who's no stranger to theatre.

Monika Gucma-Deras showed she was capable of far more than the demure church lady she portrayed in the first scene when, about halfway through the play, she let loose in an unexpected rage.

One of my favourite parts was a minor one played by someone who has never before been on stage — Earl Jollymore, who made the grumpy police chief surprisingly endearing.

Also enjoyable was the chief's nosy, meddling wife, played by Sandy Ingratta.

And kudos to Steve Prevost, a.k.a. Rev. Lloyd. He didn't have many lines, but boy, could he lie still.

Although *Sinners* it's a "black comedy," which is a bit of a change for the Players, it didn't feel all that different — director Brian Cranford seemed to lighten up much of the darker content, maybe a little too much.

Or perhaps that's exactly what Cranford was going for, knowing the loyal audience — for the most part — comes expecting a light-hearted farce.

Friday's performance was a welcome change to a Players' formula that while not necessarily stale was perhaps in need of some freshening.

Remaining show-only performances take place tomorrow and Friday at 8 p.m. Tickets cost \$20.

Saturday's performance is a dinner theatre, with dinner at 7 p.m. and curtain call at 8:15 p.m. Tickets cost \$40 in advance and \$45 at the door. Call (905) 875-0629.

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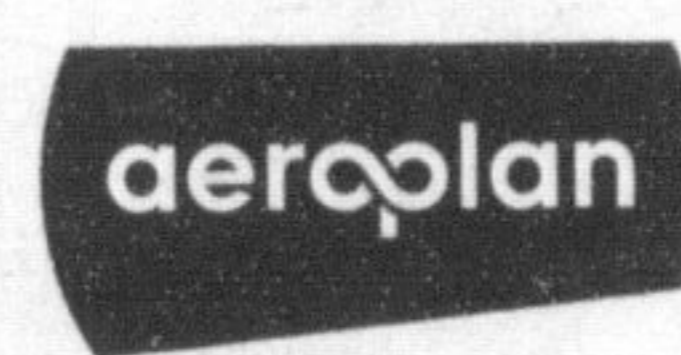
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