



Meopham Players Newsletter

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Murder most foul

Dame Kurtan Razor

Critic Of The Year



The October production is *Dead Guilty*, a murder mystery to tax your little grey cells writes *Dame Kurtan Razor*

From Sam Spade to the glacial Scandi noir crime fiction of today our fascination with murder appears bottomless. We have grown blasé as every possible variant of location, motive, and method has been explored and dissected by the whodunit genre. We have lapped up the language and structure of cinematic murder - sometimes it can come at the beginning, rarely in the middle often at the end, inculcating the vain hope until the very last that the evil deed will be thwarted.

Back in the day the perpetrator was invariably the butler, now it is the least likely suspect - a prim spinster aunt so unassuming that she is overlooked by the keenest sleuth, maybethe narrator of the yarn, even the detective isn't above suspicion and on occasion it can be a individual that is already dead. Or

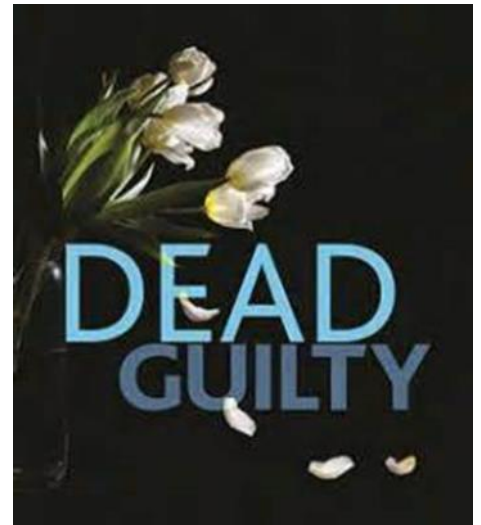
perhaps, against the odds, it wasn't a murder after all but a suicide.

All these possibilities and more will flash through your mind as the characters are introduced at the start of *Dead Guilty* and the plot unfolds.

Written by Richard Harris, this is a tense psychological study of guilt and obsession, the play concerns a young graphic artist whose leg is badly injured in a car crash that occurred when a business associate suffered a fatal heart attack at the wheel.

Housebound and depressed, Julia is tormented when things disappear, a Mexican orange blossom materializes on her shambling Victorian terrace and someone prowls upstairs at night. While a kindly counsellor contends with Julia's suicidal tendencies and a besotted handyman helps around the house, the excessively solicitous widow invades Julia's life. Suspense builds as the question becomes whether the affair Julia was enjoying with her now dead colleague will cost her own life.

Dead Guilty
26, 27 & 28 October
Meopham Village Hall



Auditions

Wednesday 3 May, at 8pm
Meopham Village Hall

Auditions for the next Meopham Players production will be held on 3 May. The play is to be directed by Eileen Bush who told the *Newsletter* :

'this great drama offers four superb roles, three female and one male. The tension inherent in the writing of Richard Harris gives huge scope for the development of the characters. It will be a challenging piece but the rewards will be terrific.'



Backstage roles at Meopham Players

Building sets, helping create props and operating equipment, the backstage crew support the designers and performers with the running of the show.

If you are interested in Stage Management, Lighting, Sound, Set design/build, Costumes and Props and a host of other back stage roles we would like to hear from you. Full training will be provided.

For more information or a chat, please email: MeophamPlayers@gmail.com

Rendezvous With The Past



Geoff Sullivan

The Blue Remembered Hills of our youth often hide uncomfortable truths

Oh no, is that him? Please, not him. I can't believe it. It is, it's him. It must be fifty years since I last saw him. but it feels like yesterday. Oh yes, I remember him. 'Want your bag do you Gibson? Well? Want it before it goes on the railway lines? Come on what's wrong with you? Why aren't you trying to fight me, eh? Oh sorry, there goes your geography exercise book, oh no. Come on you pathetic coward, fight me.'

Yes, him, Paul bloody Streeter. Every night on the way home from school I can remember him, every classroom change I can remember him. 'Gibson you're a moron.' He would call out, 'you stink Gibson.' Then he would polish it off with a punch in the stomach or boot in the groin.

I haven't seen him since school, but there he is, right in front of me, standing just to the right of the main body of guests. What is he doing here? Must be a friend or relative of the groom, I certainly can't remember Charlotte mentioning him on her wedding list.

But what am I going to do? If he starts on me I won't stand a chance, I will just cave in again, like I used to, I know I will. He will make a fool of me, in front of everyone. Just look at him, in his crisp light grey suit, sharp tie and expensive shoes. Oh yes, our Paul Streeter was always a flashy dresser, a strutting peacock.

Damn, he is looking over here. Don't come over, please don't come over.

Panic over, he's looking away again. I am sure he saw me and is pretending he hasn't, typical. He will be planning something, I know him, vindictive little thug. Smiling and joking with everyone, oh yes, he is such a nice man, he was such a nice boy. The teachers loved Streeter, made him head boy, which gave him even more power over us in the lower forms to extort money, beat us up and make our lives miserable.

So why don't I just go over there and confront him? Show him that I am not the same wimp who used to beg him not to hurt me? I just wish I could, but people like me don't change personalities, or do confrontation. I know he will humiliate me again if I do, that's what he does. Bloody hell, he is walking towards me. I need to get out of the room, make my excuses to Charlotte, tell her I am feeling ill. I will go now.

Too late, he is blocking my way, I am trapped. My hands, my legs, trembling, that



feeling of sickness, that fear, fifty year old fear. Four, three, two feet away. Still that look in his eye, still that cruelty ...

Ouch. He's just walked next to me and caught my shoulder with his, still deliberately pretending to ignore me though. Now he is turning around, towards me. It is one of his games, I knew it. 'Sorry', he says. 'No problem.' I mumble. God, I sound pathetic.

Why did I say "No problem" when it is a problem? Remember what you did to me Streeter, I want to tell him, tell him what he put me through? Seriously, I need to do or say something, this is my one opportunity to get my own back.

But I can't! I can't. Look at my fingers, just look at them. They are shaking so badly, and my lips are incapable of speech, even my head is shaking. This is what he used to do to me then, this is what he is still doing it to me now.

Now he is smiling, a smile I remember so well. 'Nice to meet you, but don't I know you'. He asks me.

Here we go, this is a tactic, a pre-humiliation tactic. He knows me well enough. I nod back, it's all I can do.

'Are you a local then?' he says.

'Yes err, Maidstone.

'Really?' So, you are made of stone, a hard man, eh? Mr Tough Nut' No he is laughing at me. Here we go.

'Do you know the bride,' he continues, 'or are you a groomer? Yes, of course you are. Careful girls, we've got a hard man here who wants to groom you!' he shouts out aloud and the laughs again.

I cringe, people are turning around and staring at us. It's the same old Streeter, nothing's changed. 'I am the uncle of err, the, err bride.' I say, barely able to get the words out.

'Oh really? Okay.' 'So, are you a local? He is asking me again.

'Yes, I am from Maidstone.' I repeat. Why are you playing games Streeter? Go on start on me, get it over with.

'Are you a relative of the bride or a groomer?' He repeats and the laughs out aloud again.

'I am the bride's uncle.' I repeat. What is he playing at?

'There you are Uncle Paul.' a girl says, interrupting us and moving alongside him. She gently slides her hand into his. 'We didn't know where you were.' Then looks down at his trousers.

On the front around the fly is a wet patch, slowly increasing in size as it moves across the dark grey material.

'Come on Uncle Paul, we need to get you home.' She tells him.

'Home? Home?' He asks her/

'Yes home. Where you live, in Wrotham, remember?'

'I live in Wrotham?'

'Yes, you live in Wrotham.'

'Home. Wrotham. I live in Wrotham. I live in Wrotham.' he then repeats over and over, like a child recalling a nursery rhyme.

'But I don't live in Wrotham, I live here.' He says, looking puzzled.

'No Uncle Paul, you don't live here.'

Holding him by the hand, she smiles at me and then slowly turns to walk away.

'Sorry about that,' she whispers, turning her head back towards me.' Uncle Paul is not very well.'

They are walking away, towards the door. Look, he is still smiling at everyone, still flashing his teeth, still laughing, even with his urine patch obvious to everyone.

Good they have left, I can relax. Strangely, my hands and legs have stopped shaking, my lips and throat have relaxed too. Where's that champagne? But I can't smile at what I have just seen, that would be cruel, even he doesn't deserve that. But, Paul Streeter, my tormenter all those years ago, you have my pity, my sincere pity. I know that I am going to sound bad for saying this, but that pity is, in truth, the one thing that you would have hated more than anything else.

What to do, what to see

Ima Starstruck



Our Showbiz Correspondent with her ear to the keyhole & pulse to the iPhone provides a pick of the upcoming hot ticket shows and events not to miss!

May 2017

3 May - 'Dead Guilty' - Auditions.



The play has a cast of one male & three females and scripts are available from Eileen Bush, email:

eileenbush9@gmail.com

13 May - Annual Treasure Hunt

This year's foray is to Limehouse and Canary Wharf where competing teams will once again lock horns solve the clues and win the coveted first prize, arranged by Lesley Boycott, email:

lboycott@btinternet.com



June 2017

Brick Lane Visit



The second visit this year to this popular music hall that is being arranged by Lesley Boycott for its 25th Anniversary Event, cost is £49.50 incl. coach travel, numbers are limited to 16. if interested email: lboycott@btinternet.com

June 2017

7 June 'Playing Coward'

The June monthly meeting is a workshop led by Paul Doust looking at the style and elegance of the Master. A session with Paul is guaranteed to be full of fun, so book your place now!



February 2018

22, 23, 24 February

The new year production is to be the children's classic *Jungle Book* it has just been announced. This will be a joint venture once again and be performed in venues besides Meopham Village Hall.



The Magic Dolls Video



If you enjoyed our panto and want to relive the magic of the performance, Matt Dallas has mastered a DVD of the show at a nominal cost of £1, to cover the cost of production. Contact Matt by email:

mattdallas@fsmail.net or you can call him on 07818 0 775 223

Meopham Players

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And Another thing...

Terry Fairhead



Music serves a fundamental human need but when did muzak become an unstoppable force, asks a our roving Arts Correspondent

Last month's article ended – if you recall – with the suggestion that we are so addicted to the use of music in film and TV drama we barely notice (consciously at least) its manipulation of our emotions and the consequent retreat from reality when dealing with serious events. What wasn't discussed though was the type of film for which music is its *raison-d'être*. I mean, of course, THE MUSICAL.

Most of us, I believe, would consider this particular genre to have originated in Hollywood and as far as musical films are concerned this is probably true; after all the very first full-length talkie, *The Jazz Singer* – as discussed last time – was a musical of sorts. However the concept was actually born in the theatre and is centuries old. It is known as Opera.

The oldest opera still performed is Claudio Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* which, using words and music, retells the story from Greek mythology of the journey made by Orpheus into



I look at the world and I notice it is turning
While my lute gently weeps

Hades to bring back his dead wife, Eurydice. It had its first public performance in 1607 and like nearly all subsequent operas, it ends in tragedy. At first sight, this may seem odd but as with the theatre, disaster produces great drama and following on from this, some of the greatest music.

However, late on in the same century some opera buffs must have thought it was time for the genre to lighten up and the Comic Opera was born. One of the earliest was *Il Trespolo tutore* by Alessandro Stradella first performed in Italy in 1679. The idea quickly spread, although not initially to Britain.

As the audience base grew over the years other versions of music combined with some

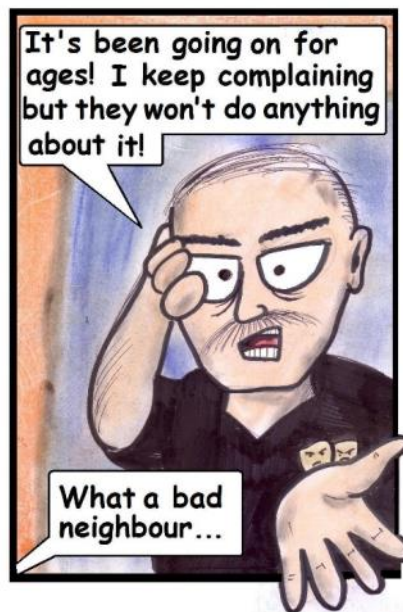
form of play-acting emerged such as Operetta, Burlesque, Music Hall and Musical Comedy.

It is the last of these that America could claim as its own. Born on Broadway at the very beginning of the Twentieth Century, one of its earliest productions was *Little Johnny Jones* staged in 1904. It was written and produced by the man who came to be known as the father of Musical Comedy, George M. Cohen.

And when the technology developed sufficiently to accommodate it, The Musical comedy morphed into the Hollywood Musical.

Next time we'll examine some of the best.

Pottham Regional Amateur Theatre Society By Matt Dallas



Matt Dallas 2017