

Anarchic farce 'Loot' packs punch

By Kathleen Allen

ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Time has dulled the shock of Joe Orton's "Loot."

But it has not dulled the laughter that comes fast, loud and frequently in this 1966 play by the British playwright, whose writing career was cut short when his lover murdered him not long after this play became a hit in London.

Live Theatre Workshop's production of "Loot" whips us back to the mid-1960s (pre-show music including tunes by Eric Burdon and the Animals helps) and quickly gives us permission to lap up Orton's anarchic humor, clever writing and outlandish situations.

The highlights:

IT'S A FARCE

Here's the situation: Mr. McLeavy, an older gentleman and devout Catholic, is mourning the death of his wife, whose casket sits in the drawing room of his apartment. Fay, the nurse who cared for his wife in her final days, is convinced a fortnight is the appropriate time for Mr. McLeavy to wait before marrying again. And, of course, he should marry Fay, who has already buried seven husbands.

McLeavy's son, Hal, is a thief who cannot lie. He and his friend, Dennis, have robbed the bank that sits next to the funeral home where Dennis works. The loot is hidden in the locked wardrobe in the drawing room. But Hal and Dennis decide that it would be far wiser to hide the money in the casket — and Mrs. McLeavy's body in the wardrobe — until the heat is off and they can exhume the casket and take the money.

Things go completely awry when Truscott, a Scotland Yard inspector



RYAN FAGAN

Clockwise, Rhonda Hallquist, Michael F. Woodson, Stephen Frankenfield and Steve Wood in "Loot."

barges in, representing himself as a member of the local water board. The water board, it seems, does not need a warrant to search.

THE TARGETS

Nothing is sacred to Orton, which ups the hilarity. Among those he skewers:

- British law enforcement — at one point, Fay claims she is innocent until proven guilty. "Who's been filling your head with that rubbish?" Inspector Truscott responds.
- The Catholic church, hypocrisy — McLeavy values a framed picture of Pope Pius XII, who is said to have been a Nazi sympathizer.
- Death — McLeavy mourns his wife's death

while rejoicing that she had the good sense to die when roses were in bloom. And the treatment of poor Mrs. McLeavy's body was shocking when the show was first staged, and is even a bit shocking today.

THE ACTING

Farce won't work if the actors aren't committed and take it very seriously. They were both and more in this LTW production.

Rhonda Hallquist's comedic sense is pristine in her portrayal of Fay, a murderer, seductress, and thief. **Stephen Frankenfield** and **Steve Wood** played Dennis and Hal respectively, and they both plunged into the farcical elements of the play.

REVIEW

- **What:** Live Theatre Workshop's production of "Loot."
- **By:** Joe Orton.
- **Director:** Annette Hillman.
- **When:** 7:30 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and 3 p.m. Sundays through June 7.
- **Where:** Live Theatre Workshop, 5317 E. Speedway.
- **Tickets:** \$18. Discounts available.
- **Reservations/information:** livetheatreworkshop.org or 327-4242.
- **Running time:** 1 hour, 45 minutes, with one intermission.

with abandon. **Michael F. Woodson**, a bumbling Mr. McLeavy, perfectly conveyed the man's sorrow at the loss of his wife, as well as the character's duplicity and willful ignorance of crimes that explode in his house and around him. **Nick Trice's** Truscott, a detective with no moral backbone, was a hoot, as was **Ed Fuller**, in the small, almost wordless role of Meadows, Truscott's sidekick. The whole cast embraced the subversive silliness of it all.

THE DIRECTING

Annette Hillman has a sharp instinct for humor and how to wring the most out of a comic script. She shaped a play that was outrageously funny, without ever sacrificing Orton's pointed jabs at social mores, corrupt policeman, and a Catholic church that the playwright implies lacks a conscience and a soul.

WORTH SEEING?

Oh yes.

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Love of music drives young composer

By Anthony Victor Reyes

FOR THE ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Angèlese Pepper and her family commuted 130 miles to be a part of Tucson Symphony Orchestra's Young Composers Project. The Safford teen began making the journey in 2012, driven by her love for music.

She taught herself how to play the cello, organ, viola, piano, harpsichord and a little bit of everything in between. Now, the 18-year-old also composes as part of the program.

This weekend, as she's about to graduate from high school and head off to Arizona State University on a full scholarship, her latest composition will get a reading as part of the orchestra's annual Composers Project Reading Sessions.

During a recent chat, Angelese said her musical path was set a long time ago, when she started playing and studying.

"I was always in my own world," she said, which made those hundreds of miles not seem so long.

LIFE AS NOTES ON A PAGE

"I haven't lived a hard, hard life, but I have had some troubles and some emotional stuff, and I put that into my music. ... Usually a piece just pops into my head, like this whole, written-out piece, and I hear it all. It is really hard because I do not know how to write it all down so quickly. ... It comes in my dreams a lot."

CHARTING A FUTURE IN MUSIC

"In the eighth grade, when I was really into the

IF YOU GO

• **What:** Young Composers Project Reading Sessions.

• **Featuring:** The Tucson Symphony Orchestra's String Quintet on Friday and the TSO's Chamber Orchestra Saturday with guest conductor Keitaro Harada.

• **When and where:** 7 p.m. Friday at the Tucson Symphony Center, 2175 N. Sixth Ave.; 2 and 7 p.m. Saturday at Catalina Foothills High School, 4300 E. Sunrise Drive.

• **Cost:** \$5 at the door.

• **Et cetera:** Throughout the three performances, audiences will hear more than 20 new works by Southern Arizona composers ages 9 to 18 who are part of the TSO's Young Composers Project.

organ, the cello and the oboe, just all these instruments, I thought, 'I think I want to be a musician.' I really love this music; I just want to have it forever. ... I don't want to be a doctor; I want to be a musician. I want to go to Juilliard. I want to be a conductor."

SHARING HER LOVE OF MUSIC

"I want to put that message out there that I really love this music and I hope you guys enjoy it, too. ... I want it to feel like an emotional experience for the audience so they can remember it for a long time."

Anthony Victor Reyes is a University of Arizona journalism student apprenticing at the Star.