

Suspecting Laughter At Trabuco Hills' Musical Comedy Murders'. Feb. 3, 2020
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As guests arrive at Elsa Von Grossenknueten's home for a Broadway audition, business goes awry when the Stage Door Slasher claims more victims. A wide array of ornate characters collaborate to identify the culprit in a night of melodramatic comedy at Trabuco Hills' 'The Musical Comedy Murders of 1940.'

Aidian Rocchi plays the struggling, optimistic comic, Eddie. After discovering he will be auditioning for celebrated director, Ken De La Maze, Rocchi's eyes widen with shock and excitement as he sprightly jumps into the air, fist raised to the sky enthusiastically, and twirls around. Rocchi's awkwardly cheerful tone and abrupt arm and shoulder movements while fighting off a killer, playfully captures the humorous aspects of the comedic murder mystery.

Delaney Miller, playing Nikki, sits silently off to the side with her ankles crossed, completely concentrating her eyes on a script. This level-headedness amicably contrasts the flamboyant director and high pitched socialite of Ken (Michael Sladek) and Marjorie (Joliya Iriarte).

Mirielle Smith amusingly plays the drunken lyricist, Bernice Roth, as she lies face down across the sofa, legs suspended over the armrest, arm dangling over the side, feeling about for a wine bottle. Smith slurs her words and stumbles across the stage, comedically taking attention away from issues at hand.

Costume designers Joliya Iriarte and Angelina White stunningly capture the lightness of Bernice with a long, flowy, amber skirt, complemented by an off the shoulder, ruffled, cream blouse. Adding to the look, hair and makeup designers, Jaclyne Schoen, Mirielle Smith, and Natalie Cinquepalmi, give Bernice a loose bun that periodically becomes less put together as the show continues, highlighting the dishevelment of her character.

Almost entirely directed by Alyssa Gauss, the impressive staging adds to the humor within each scene. Elsa (Jaclyne Shoen) is strategically placed at the front of the stage towards the left, commanding focus of the room, as she attempts to explain the information in a victim's notebook. Standing on a platform behind the guests, only visible to Elsa, Michael Kelly (Ethan Ononuoha) and Judith Kumkquat (Talla Khatatt) use charades to aid Elsa as she struggles to interpret the notes. This creative use of space work exceptionally adds to the hilarity of the show.

With exceptional use of tone and space, Trabuco's 'Musical Comedy Murders' impeccably displays the humor in a dark situation.