

TWISTS AND TURNS

'Deathtrap' is a play within a play — with lots of secrets

By **NANCY MCCARTHY**
FOR COAST WEEKEND

Audience members watching a performance of "Deathtrap" at the Coaster Theatre Playhouse may find themselves twisting and turning in their seats.

That's because the thriller contains a lot of twists and turns of its own — right up to the very last line of the last act.

It's a play full of secrets and surprises; let's just leave it at that.

But it contains enough nuance and underlying comedic touches to snare Ryan Hull into directing it. The show opens Friday, Sept. 21, and runs weekends through Saturday, Oct. 27.

"I wanted to sink my teeth into something that had a name and had good guts. 'Deathtrap' seemed to hit a lot of the marks for me," said Hull, who has acted in and directed several plays at the Coaster.

"'Guts' are shows that have good structure, good writing, make you think, twists and turns. We do a lot of thrillers here; it has a lot of those elements.

"And I liked this one because at the base of my existence I am a comedian, and this is a nice thriller that has some good funniness to it, too. So you can laugh and be shocked almost in the same instance," Hull said.

"Deathtrap" is a play within a play. Sidney Bruhl, a somewhat successful Broadway playwright, is contacted by Clifford Anderson, a young man who has written his first play, titled "Deathtrap." Bruhl agrees to meet with Anderson to discuss the play. Beginning with that meeting, secrets start to unfold.

Written by Ira Levin, "Deathtrap" ran four years on Broadway, from 1978 to 1982, making it the longest-running comedic thriller on Broadway. It was made into a movie in 1982, starring Michael Caine, Christopher Reeve and Dyan Cannon.



COLIN MURPHEY PHOTO

Bennett Hunter, seated, and Frank Jagodnik rehearse a scene from 'Deathtrap.'

Staying in the moment

The challenge facing actor Frank Jagodnik, who portrays playwright Sydney Bruhl, is not letting on about what is to come.

"The audience thinks it's going one way, and it starts moving into all kinds of directions, which makes it very interesting as an actor. You know what's going to happen, but you can't send it to them until it's the right time."

Jagodnik, who played the same role in "Deathtrap" at the Coaster 14 years ago, decided to revisit it when Hull offered him the opportunity.

IF YOU GO

"DEATHTRAP," A COMEDIC THRILLER

When: Opening night is 7:30 p.m. Friday, Sept. 21; runs Friday and Saturday nights through Oct. 27; Sunday matinees at 3 p.m. Sept. 30 and Oct. 14.

Where: Coaster Theatre Playhouse, 108 N Hemlock St., Cannon Beach

Cost: \$20 and \$25; the box office is open 1 to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday and 1 p.m. on performance days. Call 503-436-1242 or go to coaster.com to buy tickets.

Cast: Frank Jagodnik, playing Sydney Bruhl; Sue Neuer, Myra Bruhl; Bennett Hunter, Clifford Anderson; Ann Bronson, Helga ten Dorp; and David Sweeney, Porter Milgrim. Directed by Ryan Hull.

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