

By Erick Bengel
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Jenni Tronier, an actor and employee of the Coaster Theatre Playhouse since 2013, makes her debut as a Coaster director this month with Agatha Christie's 1946 play, "Murder on the Nile." Adapted from Christie's 1937 novel *Death on the Nile*, the play tells the story of 12 characters — including a newlywed couple, a jilted fiancé, a Socialist, a German tourist and a wealthy, snobbish old lady — whose lives intersect aboard a paddle steamer traveling south along the Nile River from Aswan to Wadi Halfa.

And, since this is an Agatha Christie story, "Someone dies, people are suspected and blamed and then it's up to the one detective character to figure it all out," Tronier said. "It's hard to summarize without giving too much away."

The show, which clocks in at roughly two hours and 15 minutes with intermission, opens March 13 and runs through April 18. It contains adult themes and theatrical gunshots but no foul language; if it was a movie, it would be rated PG.

Fan club

Christie (1890-1976) is famous for her crime novels, short stories and plays. Her name is "synonymous with the classic murder mystery," said Tronier, who first read *Death on the Nile* in high school.

"Agatha Christie is her own genre, really," said David Sweeney, who plays the Germanic Dr. Bessner. "There are a lot of mystery plays, but, basically, she's a benchmark in theater and in detective novels. So, a lot of times, people will be compared to her work: 'This is like Agatha Christie, blah, blah, blah.' It's sort of like going to the source, to do a play that she wrote."

Frank Jagodnik and Liz McCall, a married couple, count themselves Christie fans. "I used to read her books when I was a child," said McCall who plays Louise, a maid.



Some of the suspicious characters in "Murder on the Nile" include, from left, Frank Jagodnik (standing), Katie Youngs, David Sweeney, Jean Rice, Ellen Jensen, Mick Alderman, Josh Loring and Amie Fipps
PHOTO BY GEORGE VETTER/CANNON-BEACH.NET

Coaster Theatre stages Agatha Christie's 'Murder on the Nile'

This is the third Christie play the Coaster has put on, and "if there's an Agatha Christie, we try to be in it," said Jagodnik, who plays the detective, Canon Pennefather. "Murder on the Nile" keeps the audience on its toes, Tronier said.

"That's the one thing about a good murder mystery, is that you're constantly trying to figure out whodunnit," she said. Audience members should be asking themselves, "What are the clues? Where are the red herrings? Where can I find just a hint of who the murderer is?"

Characters

One of Christie's strengths as a storyteller is her ability to create a memorable, well-developed cast of characters, said Ellen Jensen, who plays Jacqueline de Severac.

"Every character is very specific, and every character is definitely unique and motivated in their own way. It's

a lot of human nature," she said.

What's more, Christie "not only creates unique characters, but then (she) creates unique relationships between specific pairs of characters,"

'Every character is very specific, and every character is definitely unique and motivated in their own way. It's a lot of human nature'

Ellen Jensen, "Jacqueline de Severac"

added Mick Alderman, who plays Simon Mostyn, a penniless newlywed. Alderman also designed the lighting for the play.

Trapped in a small space, the comedy and tension among the characters escalates. Then "they start killing each other," Jagodnik said.

"It would still probably be entertaining without the murder ... just not as much,"

Jensen quipped.

In "Murder on the Nile," the river and the setting are practically characters in themselves, Tronier said. Christie "brings the romanticism of the 1920s, 1930s

aristocratic society was breaking down ... The lines between the haves and have-nots were blurring, and there were people who liked that and people who didn't."

The Miss Ffolio-Ffoulkes character, played by Jean Rice as "dripping with silliness and a kind of kookiness," is "very concerned about everybody's position and who is lesser than her — and she's not afraid to show it," Tronier said.

"Even the Communist character who wants equality is still demeaning toward people who are 'lower' than him," Jensen said. The class structure is "so ingrained in them."

Challenges

Each actor has had to overcome at least one challenge with his or her character. For McCall, it was having to act subservient. For Sweeney, it was mastering a convincing Germanic syn-

tax. For the happily married Amie Fipps, it was playing a bachelorette.

But for the entire cast, who has been living with the material since December, the biggest challenge will be "remembering it's brand new to the audience, and we have to bring it fresh every time we do it and not allow ourselves to remember where it ends. We have to be in each moment as it develops," Sweeney said. This is true of every play, of course, but, "in a mystery especially, it's more of a distinct challenge in some ways not to play the outcome."

But even after the audience knows the outcome, that doesn't mean the entertainment value of the play has diminished. After all, knowing who the killer is can make for a new experience the second time through.

"Hey, I've been entertained, and I've seen it quite a few times," Tronier said, laughing.

Festival includes focused drawing of the human form

Festival from Page 1A
down — the painful heartache songs," she said.

Compassion

"We hunger for compassion. We crave it. We benefit from it. We long to know how to express it more consistently, more effectively," she said. Unfortunately, "we don't have a particularly compassionate culture," which she described as a "very competitive, materialistic, consumeristic culture, rife with anxiety and depression" and consequent physical disorders.

Positioned in the wide-legged forward bend (also known as the prasarita padottanasana), the group meditated on compassion. Then, in the downward-facing dog pose, they imagined dissolving the tension caused by their own noncompassionate word and "the story about feeling lame or ashamed."

"We can apply compassion to the pain we're causing ourselves ... That's one of the pathways out," she said. "If you apply cruelty to cruelty, you won't get out. You just go further in."

In the back of the hall sat Gina Leon, of Portland, a Yoga Festival first-timer.

"The whole conference has been very powerful and positive ... and emotional, too," said Leon, who also attended Marsh's workshop at the Surf-sand Resort the day before.

Leon, who works in banking and may undergo a career change, found the festival "very helpful in processing lots of thoughts and feelings."

Sara "Senna" Scott, of Redmond, sat near the front. The Saturday class wasn't just Scott's first yoga class at the festival; it was her first yoga class ever.

"I had self-doubts about singing," she said. "It was interesting how negativity kind



Linda Kinhan, of Cannon Beach, sketches model Julie "Fig" Yanko. Behind Yanko, Lila Wickham, left, of Cannon Beach, and Jennifer Wyman, of Tacoma, Wash., do the same.



Julie "Fig" Yanko, of Manzanita, models the Lord of the Fishes pose for a figure drawing class.

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Julie "Fig" Yanko, of Manzanita, models for David Kinhan's yoga figure drawing class. Background from left: Lila Wickham, of Cannon Beach; Kinhan, of Cannon Beach; and Jennifer Wyman, of Tacoma, Wash.

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of just came about while I was practicing. And just being able to actually practice it, and have the support and love of everyone else in the room — it was really incredible."

Life drawing

At moments, Marsh asked her listeners — the unsure beginners and the seasoned yogis — to park their thinking mind somewhere in their body. And, when their mind wandered, to coax it back to the here and now, even if it was only to pay attention to the sensations on their fingertips, or of their bare skin against the cool air.

Though mindfulness meditation lies at the heart of yoga practice, one need not necessarily assume the lotus position while om-ing in order to have a meditative experience. Making art, for example, can be just as rich and rewarding, and can produce a similar effect.

Before Marsh's workshop,

the community hall served as a temporary art studio, where Cannon Beach artist and teacher David Kinhan taught a yoga figure drawing class.

Using charcoal sticks and a canvas, five amateur artists sketched the lithe, flexible frame of Julie "Fig" Yanko, a professional model and yoga practitioner from Manzanita.

Yanko, wearing skin-tight gym wear, rotated her angular body through different yoga poses on two layers of yoga mat, sometimes holding a pose for 10 minutes or more. Meanwhile, Kinhan circled the room, moving from student to student, pointing out the shapes, contours, proportions and musculature of Yanko's body, and the negative space around it.

The human form is "one of the hardest things that there is to draw," even in a state of natural repose, Kinhan said. Drawing it in complicated

yoga poses requires even greater concentration.

"This particular type of drawing is like a yoga practice," said Kinhan, the younger brother of yoga festival founder and director Christen Allsop. "I tell people that the whole point of this class is not necessarily to make beautiful drawings that you're going to put in a frame and give to your mother. It's for you. It's for you to learn how to draw."

While drawing, "you're focusing on one thing for a certain period of time," said Sara Rieber, a festival volunteer from Portland who took Kinhan's class. "You get into a whole other world. You forget about your surroundings, which is exactly what yoga's supposed to be like."

'Trueness of line'

Now in its fifth consecutive year, the yoga festival,

held March 6 through 8 this year, typically brings between 150 and 200 yoga enthusiasts to Cannon Beach. These include world-renowned yoga instructors, like Marsh, who give classes, workshops, presentations and lectures at different locations throughout town. The 2015 festival had just under 200 participants, according to an early tally by Allsop, owner of Cannon Beach Yoga Arts.

The festival receives money from the city's Tourism and Arts Commission, which collects a portion of the city's overnight lodging taxes. To get funding, event organizers have to show that their event attracts visitors from more than 50 miles away and contributes to the city's arts scene. This year's yoga festival grant was for \$36,000.

Rebecca Bliedernich,

a St. Helens resident and friend of Allsop, has attended the festival every year, and this year marked the second time she has taken Kinhan's class. As Kinhan called it a day, and Yanko prepared for Marsh's workshop, Bliedernich, a painter, shared why yoga appeals to her.

"Everybody does yoga for a different reason," she said. "For some people, it's internal; other people, external. For me, it's visual."

Watching Yanko — whose yoga posture represents "the ideal," and whose "trueness of line" embodies what many yoga practitioners hope to achieve — "it makes me appreciate what yoga's supposed to be," Bliedernich said. "I will never have a yoga body. I will never have that trueness of line. But I can certainly appreciate it in other ways."