

Murder, mystery and mayhem take the stage in Theatre Orangeville's latest production

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Sherlock Holmes is back ? and is bringing plenty of laughs with him.

Theatre Orangeville's Dramatic Young Company is diving into Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery by Ken Ludwig. This fast-paced theatrical romp combines the familiar ingredients of a classic murder mystery with comedy, physical theatre and a healthy dose of stagecraft.

At the centre of the story are Holmes and his loyal sidekick, Dr. Watson, as they attempt to unravel a deadly mystery involving suspicious characters, unexpected deaths and clues that may not be quite what they seem.

?It's basically going to be every classical murder mystery,? a Young Company member said. ?There's villains, clues and of course, our detective Sherlock and his sidekick Dr. Watson. They're going to be meeting a whole bunch of characters and will try to solve the mystery of people who have been dying out of the blue.?

For audiences unfamiliar with the famous detective, the production promises to work simply as an entertaining murder mystery. Sherlock Holmes fans, meanwhile, can enjoy the familiar characters and references woven into the story.

The production is anything but conventional.

With a cast of young performers taking on more than 40 characters between them, some actors are switching roles at remarkable speed. One cast member is playing five distinct characters, ranging from a wise doctor to a creepy butler and an escaped convict.

The performers say the extreme differences between the characters help them jump from one personality to another.

?It's actually quite easy to find distinct personalities for each of my characters,? one Young Company member said. ?There are no two characters that you could possibly confuse with each other. They are all very unique.?

Another Young Company member, however, takes a different view.

?It is challenging for me,? they said. ?But it also really keeps you on your toes, and it means there's never a dull moment in this production.?

That rapid pace extends to the scenery.

Rather than stopping the action for set changes, the production is designed to transform. Rolling and sliding set pieces, actors hidden behind scenery and seamless transitions will help shift the action from one location to another without bringing the momentum to a halt.

The cast describes the effect as visually striking.

?I think the word that's been used has been cinematic,? a Young Company member said. ?Some plays might have blackouts to move things. Here, things will be moved in front of your eyes, and I think that's something that will be very exciting to see.?

And while there are plenty of deaths and even stage combat, the show doesn't take itself too seriously. The cast says Ludwig's comedy is carefully placed, allowing the humour to complement rather than overwhelm the mystery.

Audiences are also encouraged to play detective themselves, watching closely and deciding who they suspect before the answers are revealed.

For the young performers, Baskerville is more than another production. It is a chance to stretch their skills, tackle multiple characters and explore a style of theatre quite different from their previous fantasy-focused shows.

'There's a lot happening, and it's different,' a Young Company member said. 'There's some scenes like when we're just out in London, and everyone is involved in that, then it moves to scenes with two people, and then suddenly, someone else comes on, and you'll think 'I just saw this person as another character two seconds ago.'

And for the audiences? The cast hopes it offers exactly what theatre can do best: an opportunity to step away from everyday life, enter another world and simply have fun.

With a mystery to solve, bodies to discover, characters to suspect and plenty of theatrical surprises along the way, Baskerville looks set to make Dramatic Young Company's latest adventure one worth following closely.