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Archive | Business Yellow Pages

Search Archives:



Search Classifieds:



NEWS

- Cover Story
- Headline Stories
- Regional News
- Sports
- Editorials & Letters
- Police
- Obituaries
- Columns

ENTERTAINMENT

- Arts & Culture
- Dining
- Restaurant Guide
- Happenings
- Events & Pictures

SPECIAL SECTIONS

- Kidz/Education
- Business
- Seniors
- Blog

SPECIAL ISSUES

OTHER SCHNEPS PUBLICATIONS

ADVERTISE

ABOUT US

Columns

A VIEW FROM THE CLIFF

BY CLIFF KASDEN

Thursday, June 8, 2006 2:37 PM CDT

Graduation to murder in Astoria

Like fine wine, the Killing Kompany improves with age. Their mystery dinner theatres have been entertaining would-be detectives in the tri-state area for many years. This Friday evening, their performance "Graduation to Murder" has unfolded at Ricardo's (catering), located at 21-01 24th Avenue in Astoria. A landmark in Queens for decades, they are guilty of aiding and abetting great comedy and serving fine food. Tonight there will be a buffet, followed by a delicious full course meal and dancing. Clue #1—Try the salmon!

Now, back to the show. A dozen full tables of guests are encouraged to adopt aliases as perpetrators or sleuths for the next few hours. Police detective Michael Dorsey is our host, disc jockey and narrator. Portrayed by Jon Avner, his list of professional T.V., theatre, film and voice-over credits is not a secret. The cast members are also accomplished performers with bona fide credentials.

Tonight's plot involves graduation from a community college for the performing arts. Prerequisites for a diploma are murder! One of the educators attending commencement is beautiful professor Cindy Leper (Jenny Lind Paris). She interacts with the graduating seniors using clever "ad libs." She also sings on key! However, is something more sinister on her mind? Meanwhile Dean Harry Collic II (Bob Ader) is having a very tough semester. He sings a powerful solo but his spotlight will soon be dimmed. The fruit cocktail and salad have barely been cleared when a hail of bullets rings out. Have his enemies marked the dean for execution?

Luckily, unsuspecting dinner guests are called to the microphone as

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material witnesses. The detective shoots clever one-liners at them and offers numerous clues while they find themselves singing, dancing and responding to an irreverent interrogation. We also meet professor Irene Otto (Mandy Feiler) who some students have described as an easy "A." She offers a very demonstrative song and dance to the delight of many in attendance. Could jealousy and intrigue be part of her lesson plan?

The school's chief choreographer is Professor Chip Endale (Darin Chumbley). His demonstration, to the tune of "Macho Man," has the ladies taking detailed notes. That includes a full table of "red hat ladies." In fact, detective Dorsey has offered numerous clues. They're all available for your perusal. It's your job, at the end of the evening, to submit your solutions for this "whodunit" and compete for prizes. If you're lucky, there'll still be time for some dancing. What a night! Come to think of it, a tailor-made Killing Kompany production is a great way to celebrate your company or family milestone. Call 888-SHOOT-EM or click on their website at www.killingkompany.com. The troupe will be kommiting komedy all year long. It's truly an unforgettable evening with a life sentence for laughs.

As always, save me a seat on the aisle.

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