

Unnecessary Farce

by Paul Slade Smith

Season

This show will be produced and performed in the 2024 season.

Performances

The show runs from October 4th till October 20th.

Friday/Saturday night 8pm and Sunday 2pm with an additional Saturday 2pm show on the 19th.

Information day

Saturday 15th June

Auditions

Auditions will be held on the 6th July, from 10am at The Players Theatre, 33a Lord Street, Port Macquarie.

If you can not make the auditions on the designated day/time, an alternative time and location can be negotiated.

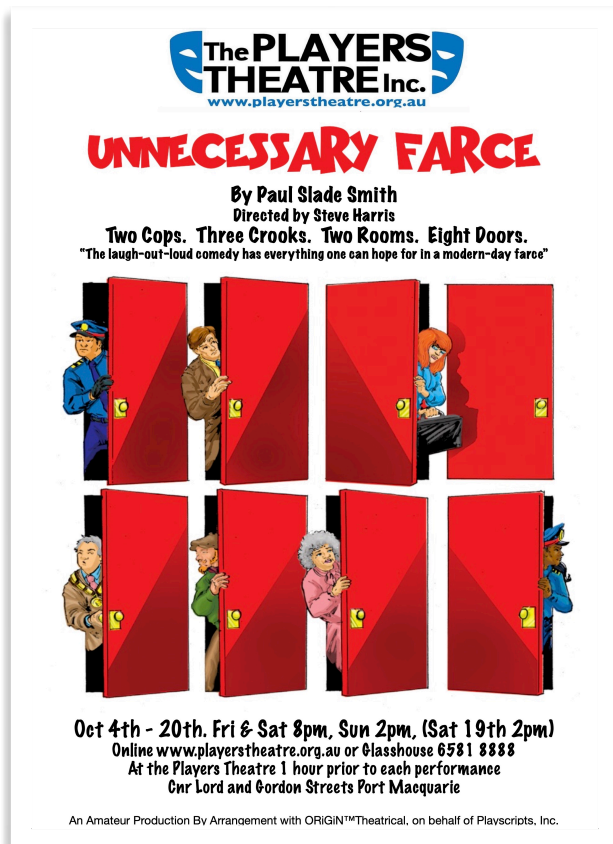
Auditions will be held in the order of arrival unless a prior

arrangement has been made due to prior other commitments.

All auditions must already have a valid Working with Children number.

Acknowledgement of Country

The Players Theatre Inc. acknowledges the Birpai people, the traditional custodians of the land on which we are gathered and perform. We pay respects to their Elders past, present and emerging and also recognise their rich cultures and continuing connection to the land and waters.



Commitment

- By auditioning, and if cast, you are committing to the following;
- A commitment to attend all performances and as many rehearsals as possible.
 - Provision of contact details and a theatre biography for the programmes.
 - Participation in publicity photo shoots and promotional videos.
 - Advise of any planned or unplanned absences as soon as practical.
 - Any other reasonable commitment the Director may make.
 - Abide by the theatre's Members and Cast and Crew Code of Conduct

Casting

- All auditionees should expect notification of the result within 72 hours.
- Successful auditionees will be contacted by telephone and offered a role.
- If your audition is unsuccessful, you will be notified by the Director.
- If not cast in the show, there may be other positions in which you can be involved.
- Roles may be changed during the rehearsal period at the discretion of the Director.

Cost

Free to audition, but if cast you must be financial members of The Players Theatre Inc and you will need a current Working with Children Certification.

Memberships: Adult \$25 | Concession \$20 | School student \$15

Rehearsals

Rehearsals will be Tuesdays and Thursdays at the theatre.

The rehearsals start on Tuesday the 9th July from 6:30 till 9:30pm

Sunday rehearsals start on 25th August from 1:00pm till 3:00pm

Extra rehearsal Monday the 30th September (if needed)

Production Team

Director: Steve Harris

Assistant Director: Wil Ferguson

Stage Manager: TBA

Lighting Design and Operator: Michael Walsh

Sound Operator: TBA

Comedic Consultant: Tim Ronan

Enquiries

If you have any questions please email me at sdh0711@icloud.com or call me on 0490 055 350.

Time and Place

The present, two adjoining motel rooms in a big town/small city somewhere in America.

Synopsis

Two cops, three crooks, eight doors, no waiting... *Unnecessary Farce* is an award-winning stage comedy that combines all the elements of classic farce with a contemporary plot.

In an economy motel room, an embezzling mayor is supposed to meet with his female accountant. In the room next door, two undercover cops are supposed to catch the meeting on videotape. But there's some confusion as to who's in which room, who's watching the video, who's taken the money, who's hired a hit man, and why the accountant keeps taking off her clothes.

Reviews

Unnecessary Farce received its premiere at the BoarsHead Theatre in Lansing, Michigan on October 27, 2006, and has had over 240 productions to date - throughout the United States, Great Britain, Australia, Singapore, Switzerland (in a Swiss German translation), Iceland (in Icelandic) and Canada (in both English and French)

"Dazzlingly funny. Can a playwright re-invent the comic shtick of in-one-door, innuendo, out-the-other-door? In the case of *Unnecessary Farce*, the answer is yes."

~ City Pulse (Lansing, Michigan)

"Like the farceurs of old, he relies on character, rather than contrivance, to drive his increasingly frenzied, unrelentingly funny plot."

~ Boston Globe

Acknowledgments

Unnecessary Farce received its world premiere production at the BoarsHead Theatre in Lansing, Michigan on October 27, 2006, under the direction of Artistic Director Kristine Thatcher. The set design was by Shelley Barish; the costume design was by Holly Spears; the lighting and sound design were by Jeffrey Shepherd; and the production stage manager was Jonathan Courtemanche.

Author Notes

A critic, reviewing the world premiere of *Unnecessary Farce* praised "the outstanding direction" and "a cast whose comedic timing is perfect," and concluded with this statement: "If the timing had been off, this would have been a disaster and not the smash hit it is!" And there you have it: a rave review and a dire warning all rolled

Having participated in the early readings and productions of my play, I've compiled some helpful hints on how to achieve "hit" while altogether avoiding "disaster." I share them with you below.

On punctuation:

I've used what I believe is standard end-of-line punctuation. A dash at the end of a line indicates the character is cut off by the following line. An ellipsis indicates a bailing off.

On beats and pauses:

Please honour them in performance; they will help you tell the story. At the same time, recognise that where I didn't indicate a beat or pause in the dialogue, one shouldn't be added. Events – and dialogue-happen at a quick pace in this play. Honouring the pace and rhythm as written will help the play succeed.

into one.

On "double scenes":

There are several key scenes in which action and dialogue are happening in both "rooms" simultaneously. The tricky part of these sections is directing the audience's focus back and forth. To put it simply: the actor who's speaking should always have the focus. What this means practically is that the actor(s) in the *opposite* room must keep movement and action at a minimum when they don't have dialogue. They won't ever "freeze," of course, but their action must be minimal enough to send the audience's focus back to where the dialogue is happening. For instance, in the first double scene, in which Billie turns on the monitor as Eric and Karen start kissing, etc.: if the audience is so drawn to watching (and reacting to) Eric and Karen the whole time, Billie's lines won't be heard, and the scene won't succeed. Instead, Eric and Karen's action must be choreographed to be "hot and heavy" when they have the dialogue, and simply holding a kiss, perhaps, when Billie speaks. The same is true in the scene in which Karen and Frank are undressing while Eric and Billie watch on the monitor. If the undressing action and the laughs it engenders cover up Eric and Billie's dialogue ("God, I hope she never gets a flat tire."), the audience will be missing half the scene, and missing out on the rollercoaster fun of jumping back and forth between rooms, which is a big part of this play.

On dialogue:

Any playwright would of course encourage the memorisation of the lines exactly as they're written. But actors and directors will find that the dialogue in this play offers a very practical reason to resist the practice of paraphrasing. As the notes above indicate, this play is filled with fast-paced dialogue, characters who cut each other off, and simultaneous conversations. So if Actor A begins to add or drop or substitute words, he'll not only throw off the rhythm of his own lines, he'll throw off the tempo of the whole scene, as Actors B and C are forced to hesitate or second-guess before speaking. Paraphrasing in any of the "double scenes" can be murder. Or can lead to murder, as Actors B and C grow to despise Actor A, and begin to plot his demise.

On doors:

Karen's first entrance follows this stage direction: "BILLIE, having exited, closes the Cop Bathroom door. The Sting Bathroom door opens." This is the first instance of many in which I've intended a very specific rhythm in the closing of one door followed immediately

by the opening of another – two actions with no language or business between them. This rhythm is not only a farcical conceit; it is also a driver of action and energy, and, most importantly (as in the above instance), a helpful tool in drawing the audience's focus from one part of the stage to another. It should be closely observed in the staging.

On the Mayor's "discoveries":

There are two times in Act Two when the Mayor enters to discover people on a bed (or beds) in compromising positions. These sections are pretty straightforward, but I offer two observations. First, it's possible to err on the side of making the activity on the bed appear too overtly sexual. The humour works best when the activity is staged (however comically) to appear as what it is: a struggle (to keep Todd on the bed, to reach the keys on the table, ea.). When the Mayor enters, and we see the scene through *his* eyes, we'll know what he's thinking, and understand his confusion, but if the tableaux are overtly sexual, it somehow isn't funny. My second observation: when all goes well, no amount of holding for a laugh will allow the Mayor's lines to be heard in these scenes—which is a wonderful problem to have. The plan of action I recommend is for the Mayor to make his entrance, say his lines (though they be completely covered by laughter) and exit. However much time I spent crafting those beautiful words, the audience won't miss them at all.

On Karen:

In the double scene mentioned above, in which Karen is attempting to signal Eric through the camera and Agent Frank thinks she's making sexual overtures, it's important for the actress to play both realities. She is, of course, urgently trying to send a signal to the other room. But she is equally determined to keep up the cover of playing someone who is "hot" – which, as it happens, she is unintentionally making into a very sexual statement. If Karen's "readings" of her "lines" ("Do you see how hot I am?" etc.) are not sexually charged, Frank's misreading of her intentions is not credible.

On Todd:

Two important points, which are semi-contradictory. First: the Scottish must be memorised, verbatim. If the actor merely speaks gibberish, Todd's frustration at not being understood – and Billie's subsequent ability to understand him – won't be believable. Second: the audience must not be able to understand a word. I've seen excellent actors struggle at this in rehearsal, especially in Todd's Act II speech: telling a "story" in which the intentions and meaning are for Todd, but entirely muddied for the audience. Things that might work: varying pitch, and using Todd's seething anger to cloud the words, i.e. growling, speaking through clenched teeth, etc. But know two things: (a) it's a process (first making sense of it, then nonsense of it), and (b) when your director tells you she can still understand what you're saying, believe her.

On credibility:

The last two notes above stress the need for an action or reaction to be believable. This is no coincidence; believability is the key

to the comedy in this play. In writing *Unnecessary Farce*, it has been my goal to create believable, identifiable, empathetic characters who are earnestly trying to succeed in very difficult and stressful situations. I encourage you to have the same goal. In my experience, the more honest the portrayal, the bigger the laughs.

July

2024

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
					Auditions	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	Rehearsal		Rehearsal			
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	Rehearsal		Rehearsal			
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
	Rehearsal		Rehearsal			
29	30	31				
	Rehearsal					

August

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
			1	2	3	4
			Rehearsal			
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	Rehearsal		Rehearsal			
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Set Build	Rehearsal	Set Build	Rehearsal			
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Set Build	Rehearsal	Set Build	Rehearsal			Rehearsal
26	27	28	29	30	31	
Set Build	Rehearsal	Set Build	Rehearsal			

September

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
						1
						Rehearsal
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Set Build	Rehearsal	Set Build	Rehearsal			Rehearsal
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Set Build	Rehearsal	Set Build	Rehearsal			Rehearsal
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Set Build	Rehearsal	Set Build	Rehearsal			Rehearsal
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Set Build	Rehearsal	Set Build	Rehearsal			Rehearsal
30						
Rehearsal						

October

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Rehearsal	Preview	Rehearsal (TBA)	Show	Show	Show
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
				Show	Show	Show
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
				Show	Show + Show	Show
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
Bump Out						

Set



Cast of Characters

Eric Sheridan: Male, 30s to 40s. A bookish, even-keeled police officer who's thrown into some difficult situations – while not wearing any pants.

Tries very hard but not really sure how to.

Complete novice when it comes to emotion or romance, but a quick learner.

Billie Dwyer: Female, 20s to 30s. A police officer. Eric's partner. Although she seems to lack every skill needed for police work, she is enthusiastic and eager to succeed.

A tomboy, not ladylike but not rough.

Karen Brown: Female, 30s to 40s. An accountant who usually has a very professional demeanour, but seems unable to keep herself in control today.

Note: the actress cast would be on stage in her underwear and/or a slip.

an accountant, mid-30s, intelligent and attractive, but – at first glance – more the former than the latter. She's a little too straight-laced, in her glasses and conservative suit

Agent Frank: Male, 20s to 50s. Town Hall head of Security. Although he can seem confident and even gruff, in moments of crisis he is easily reduced to a very frightened man.

head of Security at Town Hall, and, frankly, the wrong man for the job. Though he presents the confident, gruff exterior – and, in clothing, the appearance – of a secret service agent [or film noir detective, even], he is frequently [and, at

moments of crisis, invariably] a man frightened by his own shadow)

Todd: Male, 20s to 50s. Speaks with a pronounced Scottish accent. A professional hit man who's accent gets thicker the angrier he gets, until he's completely indecipherable.

a professional killer, and very good at his job. We first see him at his professional best: cool, quiet, perceptive. He wears an expensive suit overcoat and sunglasses

Mayor Meekly: Male, 50s to 70s. A sweet, gentle fellow, who seems very Innocent (with a capital I)

An innocent, with a capital i. An affable, gentle fellow. Not too quick on the pick-up, but a sweet, sweet soul. On every entrance – in every experience during the course of the play-he is forever happy and excited at the opportunity of discovery. As Mayor of only a "bigtown/small city," his appearance is more "friendly" than "camera ready political."

Mary Meekly: Female, 50s to 70s. The Mayor's wife. Small statured, she seems very sweet natured, and a good match for her husband the mayor.

is small in stature, and looks, in every way, to be the perfect match for her husband, Matching the Mayor, her clothes are more "friendly" than "camera-ready politician's wife.

Audition Pieces

ERIC

ERIC. Hello? Yes?

(Recognising the voice:)

Oh, Chief! *Hello*, Chief, I – No, not at all, sir.

No, I've been up and dressed for... *hours* now. Well, I knew how important it was to get an early start on the day. Exactly, sir. Very important day, for all of us on the force. Oh, things are going very well, sir. Very well. I'm sitting here now with Officer Dwyer, going over all the details of the investigation. Oh, I think we're ready, sir.

(Struggling with his clothes:)

I think you couldn't find anyone more ready than... I am... at this moment. Oh, the room is fine, Chief. What you'd expect a motel room to be. A little small, but –

(Reaching for his pants:)

but in some ways, not small enough. Yes, we've got an adjoining room with Ms, Brown, next door. And we've set up the camera in her room, and the monitor and the recording equipment in here, so –

Choreographed struggle

(More struggling)

Things could not be going any better, really. Oh no, we haven't said a word to anyone. No, that's understood, sir – we're prepared to handle this completely on our own. Not even a phone call, absolutely. Oh, and sir –

(Genuinely)

Thank you, again. For giving us this assignment. It's an honour, sir. And Chief-I promise you-Billie and I won't let you down.

(He hangs up.)

ERIC.

(Out of character, to KAREN:)

Oh, Right.

(Back in character; Macho)

Right! I'm comin' *with* you, I said. I'm not letting you meet *some guy-in* some *cheap motel* – all by *yourself* You think I don't know what kinda hanky-panky goes on in those places? I'm comin' to that motel, I said, and I'm gonna hide myself in the *closet*. You hear *that*?

(Coming at FRANK with an accusatory index finger)

You hear *that*, Mr. Town-Hall-Security-man-pointing-a-gun-in-my-face?

BILLIE

BILLIE. He put down his muffin pretty quick. Look, partner. Billie Dwyer's not gonna do anything to hinder this operation. Don't forget, I was first in my class at the Academy

ERIC.

(Not unkindly:)

No you weren't.

BILLIE. Well, I would've been, if it hadn't been for guns. And handcuffs.

ERIC. And self-defence.

BILLIE.

(Conceding:)

And self-defence.

ERIC. And driving

BILLIE. The point is, I've got what it takes. In here. And you, Eric, with your intelligence

ERIC. Billie

BILLIE. You don't belong behind some desk, shuffling papers.

ERIC.

(A little defensively:)

I don't shuffle paper-

BILLIE. Listen to me. You're cop material. We both are. And today we'll prove it. When we successfully execute the biggest police investigation in the history of this town. Today, Eric, you and I are bringing down the Mayor. Now. What do we do?

(ERIC crosses to the video monitor, which faces upstage in such a way as to never be seen by the audience.)

ERIC. Well we should turn on the video equipment.

BILLIE. God, it feels good being a cop.

MARY

MARY. I'm sorry, I don't mean to be eavesdropping

MARY. I was just so enchanted with his accent. Are you from Scotland?

MARY. Well, isn't that wonderful! My first husband was from Scotland. Iver MacPhee.

(Change of character)

MARY. Quit stalling, dear, before I stop being cheery and pump ya fulla lead.

(BILLIE slowly draws her gun, and lays it down, MARY puts it in her purse.)

That's it. Now, why don't you eject that tape, Officer Sheridan – the one of my husband's meeting with Ms. Brown.

TODD.

(This must be entirely indecipherable, but told with the range of emotion of a good story.)

Ah shoods hae killed 'er by noo, but Ah niver kill 'til Ah've played a sang oan mah bags, 'an Ah hud a wee bit ay trooble wi'mah bags-

(To FRANK:)

dinna ye ask – sae Ah tied 'er up an'pit 'er in th'lavvy, pit mah bags in mah plaidie poke, an'heeded tae mah motur tae gie mah ither bags in mah ither plaidie poke, but when Ah got oan th'lift, thaur was a laddie suckin'oan a candy bob lookin'at me funay, an'it ram tae me 'at Ah was still

wearin'mah feile-mhor, mah leine, mah feaither bunnet, an'mah sporran, an'ah thooght,

Ah canny gang it in public loch thea an''en kill someain, ur fowk nicht remember th'cheil in th'feile-mhor an'hink ay me as th'murtherer, sae Ah cam back ta teel ye ta tak'these bags in thes plaidie poke tae mah motur, an'gie mah ither bags in mah ither plaidie poke, an'brin'them riet haur.

(To FRANK:)

Div ye kin?

(Pause.)

FRANK

FRANK. Danger waits in unlikely places, Ms. Brown. My job is security. That means I'm ready for danger, wherever it hides.

(He now sees ERIC.)

FRANK.

(Upon seeing ERIC, FRANK reveals his more frightened nature:)

Holy Mary, mother of God!

(Leaping over the bed, to the Down Stage side, and cowering on the floor, his gun drawn:)

Get down, Ms.Brown

FRANK. For god's sake, save yourself!

FRANK.

(To Heaven:)

Dear Lord, in this our hour of judgment, as we prepare to gaze upon your heavenly countenance

FRANK. We ask that you open your arms to us

FRANK. As you call your children home to the garden of

FRANK. Are you nuts? There's always something to be afraid of! And right now there's a crazy man standing in your closet.

FRANK.

(Raising his gun, fully composed – the secret service agent again.)

Now, would you mind telling me exactly what you were doing hiding in that closet, while your girlfriend was in here having a meeting with the Mayor?

MAYOR

MAYOR. Alright then.

(He enters. At some point, KAREN closes the sting hallway door)

Thank you. It's nice to finally meet you, Ms. Brown. I apologise for being early.

KAREN. No, no

MAYOR. I just so look forward to meeting new people. Seeing different places. I spend so much time at Town Hall, you see. That's where I work. At Town Hall, I'm the Mayor. Well of course you know that. But it's such a stuffy place, and all the people are the same, day after day. But you're not the same, are you.

KAREN.

(Unsure:)

No?

MAYOR. I mean you're not the same accountant—the *old* accountant. Not that he was old.

BILLIE. This is going to be a long morning.

MAYOR. He was actually a little too young, as I recall. You're young, too, but I like you — you're new.

KAREN

ERIC.

(Beat)

Well, I guess there's something to be said for not rushing things.

KAREN. Rushing things? I'm thirty-five years old, Eric. I'm an accountant. Who works with other accountants. You're the first man I've met in ten years who didn't ask me for my number rounded to the nearest integer. And you're sweet, And you're sexy. And you're... GOD!

ERIC. Oh boy. You're hot when you're pissed.

KAREN. No — I'm not.

ERIC. Yes. You *are*.

KAREN. No, I mean I'm normally not. I don't usually have this kind of... energy. But... I don't know. After a whole night of us... not... doing... anything—I can't help it, I'm filled with this... sexual... *hunger*.