



SPOTLIGHT

401 North 6th Street

August 29, 2024

www.fslt.org

Dates: Opening Night of *Murder on the Orient Express* will be Thursday, September 12. Regular performances will be September 13-14 and 18-21. A matinee will be offered on Sunday, September 15.

Show Times: Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m. Patrons may be seated after 6:45 p.m. Matinees begin at 2:00 p.m. Patrons may be seated after 1:15 p.m.

Season Flex Pass Seat Selection: Seat selection begins 7:00 a.m. **Saturday, August 31** for Flex Pass patrons. Select seats online at fslt.org or call the Box Office at 479-783-2966 (extn. 2) to request seats on the phone. Flex Pass patrons may also purchase an additional ticket for every pass they have.

General Public Tickets: General public tickets available beginning 7:00 a.m. **Thursday, September 5.** Purchase online at fslt.org or call the Box Office at 479-783-2966 (extn. 2) to purchase on the phone. Opening Night tickets \$20. All other performances \$13.

Box Office Phone Calls: Be prepared to leave a message with details about your seat/ticket request including a phone number where you can easily be reached. Volunteers will return calls during variable hours.

SIP SIP HOORAY!

Oh the excitement of Opening Night! Courtesy of Sodie's Wine and Spirits, wine and champagne is served pre-show. At intermission, a special dessert is served along with brew from Fort Smith Coffee. Tickets are \$20. (By calling the Box Office, Flex Pass and Wednesday Night Subscribers can attend Opening Night for a \$7 fee.)

AGATHA CHRISTIE CLASSIC PRESENTS PERPLEXING MURDER



The story you are about to witness is one of romance and tragedy, primal murder, and the urge for revenge. What better way to spend a pleasant evening together? - Hercule Poirot, Murder On the Orient Express

Istanbul, 1934. A group of international travelers board the luxurious Orient Express, a train that promises an opulent three-day journey across Europe. By morning, one passenger is dead and eight others become suspects. Fortunately the world's greatest detective, the Belgian eccentric Hercule Poirot, is aboard to solve one of Agatha Christie's most fiendishly clever plots.

Duff Taylor directs the adaptation of Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* written by Ken Ludwig. The show plays September 12-21 at Fort Smith Little Theatre. Often referred to as the "Queen of Crime," Agatha Christie is an English mystery novelist best known for her 66 novels, many featuring fictional detective Hercule Poirot. *Murder on the Orient Express* is one of Christie's most popular works and has been adapted for film and tv multiple times, most recently in 2017 featuring Kenneth Branagh as Poirot. The case in the novel and play is based roughly on the Lindbergh baby kidnapping in 1932.

While traveling, Hercule Poirot (Jon Gustafson) is summoned back to London. With the help of his old friend Bouc (Michael Richardson), Poirot books passage on the Orient Express. By morning, one passenger is dead and Poirot must investigate to identify the murderer.

Aboard the train, is American businessman Mr. Ratchett (Ian Miller) and his secretary Hector McQueen (Brett Short); the wealthy and abrasive American matron Mrs. Hubbard (Tina

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We greatly appreciate two of Fort Smith's leading corporate citizens, **Landmark CPAs** (formerly Beall Barclay) and **First National Bank**, who are co-sponsoring *Murder on the Orient Express*. By underwriting the cost of this production, their generosity helps us maintain affordable ticket prices.

As one of the largest locally owned public accounting firms in Arkansas, **Landmark CPAs** provides a full range of accounting, tax, assurance, and advisory services to a diverse client base. Let the experts at Landmark CPAs help you discover your financial direction.

As early as 1950, **First National Bank** was supporting FSLT by advertising in our show programs, and through the decades they have continued their generous patronage. Founded in 1872 and still locally owned, First National Bank is here to serve all your financial needs. Our community...Your Bank!



Director's Notes



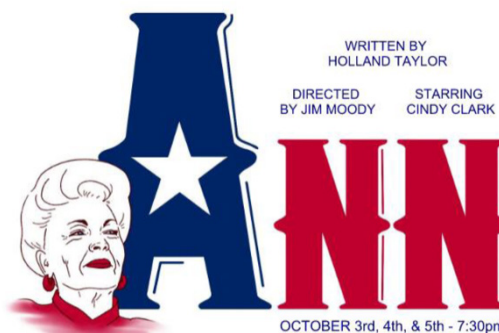
I am very excited to be a part of *Murder on the Orient Express*, having been a fan of mysteries and detective shows since I was a little child. My family gathered around the TV and enjoyed MacMillan and Wife, Columbo, The Rockford Files, and many others.

We also watched movies on the big screen and early cable channels like HBO, where I first encountered the estimable Hercule Poirot! Thank you, Albert Finney, Peter Ustinov, and most recently, Kenneth Branagh. I finally discovered the BBC version featuring David Suchet and binged every episode!

Unlike Agatha Christie, who tired of her strange little man, many of us cannot get enough of him. Numerous people have told me that *Murder on the Orient Express* is their favorite, book, movie, or tv show. With help from our community, including a special thank you to Rainwater Clothiers for dressing Hercule Poirot, I hope if you are an Agatha Christie fan you will be able to say this is your favorite play.

-Duff Taylor, *Director*

DON'T MISS ANN



Ann is an intimate, no-holds-barred portrayal of Ann Richards, the legendary late Governor of Texas. This inspiring, salty, and blisteringly funny one-woman play brings us the complex, colorful, and captivating character who was bigger than her beloved home state. You'll savor her wit and tenacity. *Ann* will be played by Cindy Clark who performed the sold-out one-woman show *Belle Starr By Herself* at FSLT in 2018. Directed by Jim Moody, performances will be on **October 3-5**. As an off-season production, tickets are only available at the door. \$7 per person. No assigned seats. Doors open at 6:45 pm. Curtain time 7:30 pm. Admission is not included as part of a Season Package. Don't miss seeing *Ann*!



Murder on the Orient Express opens September 12

Dale); the beautiful Hungarian Countess Andrenyi (Carol Sikes); Russian Princess Dragomiroff (Micki Voelkel) and her Swedish traveling companion Greta (Rikkee Black); English governess Mary Debenham (Janelle Cox); and Scottish Colonel Arbuthnot (Brad Nance). Kurt Marine is the Turkish headwaiter, and French train conductor Michel (Stephen Martin) provides luxurious amenities for all.

Supporting Taylor as director, key crew positions include Coleman Smith as producer, Michael Fox and Elysa Braunm-Turner as stage managers. Taylor designed his own set with construction assistance from Scott Black and Brad Nance. Lynne Gustafson and Sandy McPherson are costumers, Nicole Bostick is handling props, Rebekah Martin is the lighting designer. Additional crew members include T.J. Dudley and Margaret Montgomery.

FSLT's three-quarter round stage was a challenge for staging according to director Taylor: "I stripped the set to its bones and cast excellent actors to showcase the depth of characters in the story. I asked our light designer, Rebekah Martin to create a film noir theme which increases the tension between what is just and unjust. Shadows and light will play with the mood and tempo of a memory that plagues Poirot's core belief of right and wrong."

Martin is designing the lights for *Orient Express* as a project toward her MFA in Theatre at Randolph College in Lynchburg, VA. "I was paired this semester with Ariel Benjamin, a brilliant lighting design mentor based in Brooklyn, New York. It's an honor to have her input as I work with Duff and this talented cast to bring this story to life on the FSLT stage. And as an added bonus, this will be my 50th show at FSLT to design lights for since first lighting this stage in 2006!"

Bringing to life a universally known character like Hercule Poirot has been a labor of love for actor Jon Gustafson: "Preparation for this iconic role will of course involve emulation of familiar remembrances of the Inspector as they have appeared in film and television. But portraying Poirot in this story must also show hidden parts of his character as he faces a deeply personal dilemma in his words that 'made me question the very deepest values I have held.' This role is both a privilege and a challenge."

New volunteer Janelle Cox makes her FSLT debut in this show: "I woke up one day and decided that it was time for a new adventure, and it wasn't long before I found myself, on a whim, auditioning for a play at the Fort Smith Little Theatre. And now, I am making my stage debut at this precious theatre. I am so excited and thankful to be part of something so amazing! The cast here is incredibly talented with camaraderie that makes them a joy to work with! They have been so welcoming, and I am learning so much from them!"

This show marks the welcome return of veteran actor Michael Richardson: "I am delighted to be back on stage at FSLT after a five-year hiatus. The theatre has continued to evolve and attract new volunteers...that is our strength and the reason for a successful 77-year run...Bravo! Curtain Up!"

Tickets for Opening Night, September 12, are \$20. All other performances are \$13. Evening shows begin at 7:30 pm. The Sunday matinee on September 15 begins at 2 pm. Flex Pass patrons can begin seat selection at 7 a.m. Saturday, August 31. Tickets go on sale to the general public on Thursday, September 5. Tickets may be purchased online at fslt.org or by calling 479-783-2966 (extn. 2). All aboard for a first class ride!

Memorials

We are grateful for those who donated to FSLT in memory of Steve Dwiggins: Neal Goodwin and Randy Pace, Louanna and Jack Green, Lee Ann and Ronny Krisell, and Carol Springs. As an actor, board member, and past President, Steve contributed to FSLT for many years. He is dearly missed.

Seating Late Arrivals

To minimize disruption for patrons and actors, those arriving after curtain time will be seated only at a suitable break in the performance. It is also possible that you may be placed in a more accessible seat then moved to your purchased seat at intermission. Seating after a performance has begun is subject to the discretion of FSLT.



Fort Smith Little Theatre
SPOTLIGHT

P.O. Box 3752, Fort Smith, AR 72913
www.fslt.org

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From the Top...

If there's any one trait that is common among FSLT volunteers, it's that we wear a lot of hats – and that certainly rang true in the wonderful production of *Hello, Dolly!*

When ensemble members were suddenly removed by illness and broken limbs, Shannon Stoddard (Director) and Jamie Lambdin-Bolin (Assistant Director) stepped on stage, quickly changing hats from that of crew to cast. This happens more often than you know, as our community theatre does not commonly cast understudies. It's a testament to the talent, flexibility, and commitment of our volunteers. After all, the show must go on.

Secondly, any mention of hats has to include those big beautiful chapeaus that Janet Renwick and her team created to accessorize all those period costumes. We are proud to say that many of those well designed items will appear on stage again as The Rep in Little Rock has purchased them for their own upcoming *Hello, Dolly!* production.

Now we are gearing up for a mystery – Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*. Grab your passport and get on board for this clever, complex, classic who-done-it. It runs September 12-21 and will surely be a first class ride.

And don't forget our off-season production, *Ann*, October 3-5. Cindy Clark will bring the late, legendary Governor of Texas to life in this one-woman portrayal of Ann Richards. I'm personally really looking forward to *Ann*. I grew up in Texas and voted for her the first time I ever cast a ballot.

It may still be warm outside, but it's fall y'all! So put down your pumpkin spice latte and come to FSLT for some great entertainment. See you at the theatre!

- Tina Dale, *President*



Auditions for the comedy, *The Outsider*, directed by Tina Dale, will be held **Monday, October 7**. Callbacks Tuesday, October 8. Production dates are November 14-23. The cast calls for 4 males ages approximately 30-60+, and 3 females ages approximately 20-50+. This insightful and timely comedy skewers politics and celebrates democracy. Character descriptions and complete details are posted at fslt.org/auditions.



Season Flex Pass patrons are urged to select seats before September 5.