

# Murder-mystery *The Mousetrap* comes to Moncton

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Cody Bolton as Giles Ralston and Rebecca Rideout as Mollie Ralston rehearse for the upcoming Hubcity Theatre production of *Mousetrap* at Crandall University on Thursday November 20, 2014.

Photo: VIKTOR PIVOVAROV/TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

You can try to solve the mystery when theatre's most legendary "whodunit" comes to Moncton this weekend. Hubcity Theatre presents Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap* Nov. 27 to 29 at the Empress Theatre.

"This is the play that really shaped the mystery theatre genre," says Hubcity Theatre artistic director Paul Power. "It's not only the longest running play in history, the story itself remains timeless and is just as intriguing today as when first produced. We're very excited to bring this piece of legendary theatre to Moncton."

*The Mousetrap* was first presented in London's West End by Peter Saunders at the Ambassadors Theatre on November 25, 1952. The play is a combination of 1950s English comedy, with classic Christie murder-mystery. Known for its twist ending, *The Mousetrap*, Agatha Christie's most successful play, has never stopped running in London since its premiere.

Rebecca Rideout is a recent import to the Moncton scene, after graduating from St. Thomas University last year with a degree in drama. She was heavily involved in community theatre in her home town of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia and decided to audition for Hubcity when the casting call went out for *The Mousetrap* after her parents forwarded her the notice. She won the part of Mollie Ralston.

"I was familiar with Agatha Christie's work," Rebecca says, "and I had read a lot of them like *And Then There Were None*. In fact, I wrote a paper on the movie version of *Murder on the Orient Express*. I had never heard of this story but I read the play before I started the rehearsal and loved it. I am enjoying getting to bring it to life, I love Agatha Christie – her whodunits are very good. Sometimes when you read a mystery novel you figure it out before the end, but she keeps you guessing until the reveal."

After its debut in London in 1952, *The Mousetrap* had by far the longest initial run of any play in history, with its 25,000th performance taking place in November 2012. This makes it the longest running show of any type. A staging at the Toronto Truck Theatre that opened on Aug. 19 1977 became Canada's longest running show, before finally closing on Jan. 18, 2004 after a run of 26 years and over 9,000 performances.



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Brad Bullard as Sgt. Trotter and Rebecca Rideout as Mollie Rabston rehearse for the upcoming Hubcity Theatre production of *Mousetrap* at Crandall University on Thursday November 20, 2014.  
Photo: VIKTOR PIVOVAROV/TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

Without giving too much away the show features a group of guests trapped in a guest house during a snow storm right after a murder has taken place. It is an eclectic group that includes the owners of the manor, a retired major, a strange Roman, an unknown stranger, and a police investigator, a critical old woman and a man on the run. As the story unfolds it is difficult to figure out who might be guilty and why.

"I think it is very well cast," Rebecca says. "As the characters, we are kind of a kooky bunch. It is not so much a comedy but there are comedic elements as the characters are actually caricatures and everyone is doing a really good job of bringing that out. The story is up there among my favourites, and the characters really make the story."

When the play first ran in London, Christie refused to publish the short story it was based on, and also admonished theatregoers not to reveal the ending. The play has still never been published in England although in North America it exists within a book of short stories with the title, *Three Blind Mice*.

Interestingly, the play had to be renamed at the insistence of Emile Littler who had produced a play called *Three Blind Mice* in the West End before the Second World War. The suggestion to call it *The Mousetrap* came from Christie's son-in-law, Anthony Hicks. In Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, "The Mousetrap" is Hamlet's answer to Claudius's inquiry about the name of the play whose prologue and first scene the court has just observed in scene three and is connected to the famous line which Hamlet utters, "The play's the thing" in which he intends to "catch the conscience of the king."

"This is one of those stories where you will keep guessing and trying to figure out who has done it through the entire thing," Rebecca says. "I think that people should come see it because it is nice to go to something in Moncton put on by people living here, by the people here. It is something different to go to a live show instead of a movie."

"This play is appealing to those who want to sit back and be entertained but it also stimulates the brain quite well – plus it is set during a snow storm so it will put you in the mood for Christmas."