

# Murders spin tangled web in Shuler mystery

By Tim Keller  
Special to The Chronicle-News

RATON — For its fourth and final professional repertory production in as many weeks, the Shuler Theater's Kaleidoscope Players this weekend opened "Web of Murder," a cleverly written and carefully crafted intrigue that keeps viewers guessing right up to the final curtain. Jonathan Troy's 1964 murder mystery is a little-produced gem found in a stack of a hundred plays on the shelf of the Shuler's artistic director, Gail Dixon-Willden. She handed it to director TJ Mendez, who has created an audacious set design that heightens the atmosphere in a house that even its owner sometimes refers to as "Nightmare Mansion."

It takes a while to introduce the play's nine characters and set the action in motion, but soon enough the audience is hooked as characters start mysteriously dying off. Set in an

isolated northern California mansion on a cliff over the Pacific—with lightning and thunder raging outside, of course—the play's characters are the captive audience of manipulative Minerva Osterman, who has gathered them for the reading of her will.

Well-played by Janese Little, Osterman has more on her mind than a simple reading; her guests can seem like chess pieces that she's moving around. They include her long suffering daughter (Jillian Solano) and housekeeper (Brenda Ferri), her severe German physician (David Trudeau), and her nieces (Brittany Hernandez and Catherine Herrick), who displease Osterman by bringing their uninvited male partners (Jason Wells and Zach Salazar).

Another uninvited and unwelcome guest also arrives. H.M. Burleson's character (Mr. Brooks, aka "The Man") appears mostly in the shadows.

It's a character-driven

drama in which each character's back story is gradually revealed, leading to a complex mystery of conflicting motives and manipulations. There are some big surprises along the way, one of which is (spoiler alert) that not everyone who dies stays dead. It's fun.

Even if you can figure out who's guilty of murder here — pure guesswork — you won't know why or how until the final curtain falls: the script keeps its secrets that long.

And once that curtain falls, the first reaction is to want to see the play again right away, to see how the pieces worked.

The Shuler's production of "Web of Murder" will be presented again Thursday night at 7:30 p.m., with two final performances Aug. 2 and 3.

General admission tickets are available at the door — \$15 for adults, \$13 seniors, \$5 children. Additional information is available at the Shuler Theater, (575) 445-4746.



Tim Keller/Special to The Chronicle-News

Director TJ Mendez's audacious set design is one of the best characters in "Web of Murder," heightening this argument between Nora, the housekeeper (Brenda Ferri), and the mysterious Mr. Brooks (aka "The Man," played by H.M. Burleson). The production continues through Aug. 2.

# Wife upset with cafe worker's crush on her husband



Dear Abby  
Jeanne Phillips

**DEAR ABBY:** My husband, "Vic," and I used to work at the same company. While I worked there I noticed that one of the

women who worked in the building cafe seemed to have a crush on him.

I left work to be a stay-at-home mom. I trust my husband and know he would never do anything with this woman. However, I'm uncomfortable because he talks about her often, and she gives him free food just about every day and jokes around with him. If I have lunch with Vic there, she won't look at me. She and I used to talk often.

I haven't said anything to him about how I feel.

Should I worry about this? Should I ask him to be careful around her? -- ALLERGIC TO WHAT SHE'S SERVING

**DEAR ALLERGIC:** Mention to your husband that you have noticed a change in the server's reaction to you, if you wish -- but I don't think you have anything to be worried about. She probably does have a crush on Vic, and the reason she can't look at you may be she feels guilty for flirting with him, or your presence is a reminder that he is unavailable, which spoils her fantasy.

**DEAR ABBY:** I'm the mother of three sons. Over the years, I would sometimes play rough and wrestle with them, all in good fun. Now that they're almost all grown and out of the house, I find myself getting carried away with this type of play with my spouse. He was on the wrestling team in school, so invariably I always lose. But he knows

how to play without hurting me.

Is there something wrong with me for wanting to play so rough at times? He seems to enjoy it, but there have been times when I've walked away bruised if I let him go too far. Otherwise, I'm an ordinary female who you'd never guess would love to wrestle. How many other women out there do this? -- FEELING WEIRD IN CALIFORNIA

**DEAR FEELING WEIRD:** I don't have the figures, but some women like to wrestle as a form of foreplay. However, because it is leaving you with bruises, you and your spouse may be carrying the wrestling a bit too far. If it's not foreplay, but some form of competition, perhaps you should


consider taking up another sport with him where you'll have a chance of winning sometimes rather than always being the loser.

**DEAR ABBY:** How does one politely but firmly turn down door-to-door salespeople? How should I respond to salespeople who become rude once I tell them I'm not interested? Many of them become hostile once they realize I can't be persuaded to buy what they're selling. -- NO THANK YOU IN LONG BEACH, CALIF.

**DEAR NO THANK YOU:** If this is happening regularly, the first thing to do is post a sign next to your door that says "No Soliciting." When someone you don't know knocks or rings your bell, don't answer it. If you somehow get

trapped into hearing the sales pitch, when the person pauses for breath say firmly, "Not interested," and close your door. Remember, the person is not trying to make a friend of you; the person WANTS something. You do not have to tolerate rudeness.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at [www.DearAbby.com](http://www.DearAbby.com) or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.



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**Regarding the Special Municipal Election on July 31, 2012 -**

## ATTENTION MAIL IN VOTERS – PLEASE COMPLETE THE AFFIDAVIT ON THE BACK OF THE RETURN ENVELOPE IN FULL AS FOLLOWS:

For Election Office Use Only

State of Colorado \_\_\_\_\_  
Municipality of Trinidad  
County of Las Animas

I, Your Name, affirm and say that I am a qualified and registered elector in Precinct No. \_\_\_\_\_, Municipality of Trinidad and state of Colorado; that my residence and post-office address is \_\_\_\_\_ Your Address; and that I herein enclose my ballot in accordance with the provisions of the "Colorado Municipal Election Code of 1965".

VOTER SIGN HERE X Signature

I REALIZE THAT IF ANY FALSE STATEMENTS ARE CONTAINED HEREIN THAT I SHALL BE SUBJECT TO PROSECUTION FOR CRIMINAL ACTION.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

- This voted ballot MUST be received by the Clerk's Office no later than 7:00 P.M. on Election Day to be counted. Postmarks DO NOT count as delivery or receipt; the voted ballot MUST BE IN THE CLERK'S OFFICE by 7:00 P.M. on Election Day.
- Failure to sign the AFFIDAVIT OF VOTER will invalidate your ballot.
- Voting more than once in the same election is a crime.

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