

GEORGETOWN LIVING



Cast members of "Goodnight Captain White" react to being questioned as possible murder suspects. From left are Daniel Wall, Peter Holmes, Kristi Wacome, Rachel Pust and Matt Hillas.

A new star at the Starlite

Gloucester playwright takes over directorship of Starlite Dinner Theatre at Giordano's

By Sally Applegate
RECORD STAFF

Life returns to the darkened Starlite Dinner Theatre this weekend. For the first time since last summer, area audiences will come to Georgetown to see enjoy a play in the theater's informal atmosphere.

Directing operations will be well known Gloucester playwright Mark Stevick, who is also an assistant professor of communications at Gordon College in Wenham. Stevick will present his interactive play "Goodnight Captain White," which is loosely based on the actual 1830 murder of sea captain Joseph White.

"I call it a 'hysterical murder mystery' since it is not a reenactment of the murder. It was inspired by it, but it is an extremely funny play," Stevick says.

Although much of the play is scripted, some sections are improvised.

"The audience runs the show for a good chunk of Act II. They are free to

ask questions, and the actors improvise the answers. Depending on the audience, we have five different endings for this play, so it's a different show every performance," Stevick says.

Stevick came to Georgetown to meet theater owner Robert Giordano after reading a Georgetown Record story last fall on the search for someone to take charge of the dinner theater, since Giordano wanted more time for his personal life. Stevick recalls his first impression of the theater when he came up to see it in December.

"It felt like a room which needs to be activated. I could picture people enjoying desert and clinking glasses, enjoying themselves watching a play. It looked like the kind of venue which is right for my play, with its tiered audience seating. I told Bob [Giordano] I needed a place for a long run of the play," Stevick says.

The play has been described as "The Importance of Being Earnest" meets "Shear Madness." Stevick jokingly says that with its five possible endings, his play has two more than "Shear Madness."

Stevick says his favorite playwright is Tom Stoppard, writer of "Shakespeare in Love," and his work is influenced by Stoppard.

The lively cast hails from Gloucester, Salem, Beverly, Somerville, Wenham and Lexington, and is made up of

theater students from Gordon College.

"We have bright, energetic, fun students at Gordon who join us for projects outside the campus. The college is in its fourth year of a new communications major, the fastest growing major on the campus," Stevick says. The group is known as The Empire Theatre Company.

Associate director John Sarrouf, who is handling most of the directing for this production, hopes to draw the audience into another world for an evening.

"I imagine an audience entering a world from a different time period and finding themselves in the living room of a murder mystery set in the 1830s. I hope they feel so welcome and have so much fun with it they're ready to get on the stage and solve the murder themselves," Sarrouf says.

Giordano points out that audience members who just want to relax and watch the play are welcome to do so without interacting.

On tours of the White Mansion in Salem, where the actual murder took place, it used to be a taboo subject, according to Stevick. The accused murderers were Richard and George Crowninshield, from another prominent Salem family.

At the time of White's death, the Crowninshield family suppressed the

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Playwright and theater director Mark Stevick, left, with associate director John Sarrouf, are this Saturday's grand opening of Stevick's interactive comic murder mystery "Goodnight Captain White" at Starlite Dinner Theatre.