

'Deathtrap' Is Thriller and Comedy in One

By **Jim Lowe** Staff Writer

MONTPELIER — *Deathtrap* is one of the few stage comedies that manages to be a thriller as well. Lost Nation Theater opened a production of Ira Levin's 1978 Broadway hit, Friday at City Hall Arts Center, that proved hilarious and had some real scares.

Deathtrap, which was made into a feature film in 1982 starring Christopher Reeve, centers on Sydney Bruhl, a washed-up playwright living in the Connecticut suburbs on the fame of his one big hit and his wife's money.



From left, playwright Sidney Bruhl (John D. Alexander) and his wife Myra (Elizabeth Wilcox) are forewarned by psychic Helga ten Dorp (Maura O'Brien) in Lost Nation Theater's *Deathtrap*. Photo by Jim Lowe

When Bruhl's student from a recent seminar submits a script that proves to be brilliant, ideas begin to percolate. Could he get away with murdering the student and take credit for it himself?

Bruhl invites the younger playwright, Clifford, to his out-of-the-way home – and the fun begins. But, with interference from his wife Myra, the psychic Helga ten Dorp who has moved in next door, and his mercenary lawyer Porter, nothing is as it seems. The fun – and thrill – is finding out.

Lost Nation's professional production, directed by Megan Callahan, delivered both as a comedy and a thriller. Well-cast and well-timed, it proved thoroughly entertaining, with very little to complain about.

John D. Alexander, an experienced actor, was a natural as Bruhl, arrogant and insecure with a sense of humor. Chris Corporandy, too, was natural as the seemingly naive Clifford, hiding his own cunning. Although both performances could have been toned down for more effectiveness, the actors interacted hilariously.

Elizabeth Wilcox as Myra and Larry Lambeth as Porter, though a bit monochromatic, were well cast. Maura O'Brien, though, was a riot as the canny and crazy Helga.

Very creative sound and lighting by Shawn Sturdevant and John Forbes, as well as an appropriate set by Donna Stafford, were major contributions to the entertainment. The only distractions to this fine production were a tendency toward unnatural loudness and irrelevant movement on stage.

Lost Nation's *Deathtrap* kept Friday's opening night audience on the edge of its seats — when it wasn't laughing.