

Theater Review: 'Wait Until Dark' Is a Thrill

By Jim Lowe

COLCHESTER — When the lights go out on the deadly intruders, only Susan can find her way — she's blind.

Saint Michael's Playhouse opened a truly exciting production of the Frederick Knott thriller "Wait Until Dark," in Jeffrey Hatcher's new revision, Wednesday at Saint Michael's College's McCarthy Arts Center. It was genuinely scary, and entertaining.

Knott's original "Wait Until Dark" premiered on Broadway in 1966, and was made into a feature film in 1967 starring Audrey Hepburn. The original was set in contemporary times, while Hatcher's 2013 version backdated it to 1944 with other minor changes, tightening it for modern audiences.



Abby Lee is Susan, a blind woman with a secret, and John D. Alexander is Roat, the thug determined to wrest it from her, in the Saint Michael's Playhouse production of "Wait Until Dark."

Photo by Brian MacDonald

Susan and Sam are a young couple living in a Greenwich Village basement apartment. He is a freelance portrait photographer, and she is a blind housewife. When Sam is called out to Long Island by a phoned request, Susan finds herself being visited by unexpected men — first a cagey police sergeant reporting that a woman's body has been found nearby, then an upset older man looking for the man ruining his son's marriage, then the man's exasperated son.

Something unpleasant is going on. Finally, Mike, a marine who served with Sam, shows up and offers to help, and offers welcome support. But soon, he is off on a quest for her and she is alone. But not for long.

St. Mike's production, skillfully directed by Sarah Carleton, was truly a taut thriller — not without its moments of humor — at Wednesday's opening night performance. The cast was excellent.

Abby Lee gave a fully dimensional performance as Susan, mixing elements of a loving but insecure wife, a strong woman trying to prove herself, and, of course, a petrified victim. Conversely, John D. Alexander mixed oily and downright menacing as Roat, a powerful thug.

Bill Carmichael was wonderfully sleazy as the cop Sgt. Carlino, while Christian Kohn exuded wholesomeness as the marine Mike. David Rossetti truly enjoyed his limited part as husband Sam, introducing some of the enigma. Jillian Kenny, a very young-looking Saint Michael's College sophomore, gave real life to Gloria, the obnoxious upstairs teenager and thorn in Susan's side — and ultimately her biggest help.

Wednesday's was the production's first performance, and there were moments of loose timing. These should tighten up quickly with subsequent performances. St. Mike's doesn't indulge in "preview" performances.

The physical production, typical of St. Mike's, was excellent. Carl Tallent's most realistic set, Debra Krajec's period costumes, Anthony Pellacchia's dramatic lighting and Zach Williamson's underscoring sound design all contributed to the Alfred Hitchcock-style atmosphere.

With "Wait Until Dark," Saint Michael's Playhouse has created a fully dimensional thriller. Now, that's entertainment.