



PHOTO COURTESY OF LEMON BAY PLAYHOUSE

The following actors appear in "Exit Laughing" at Lemon Bay Playhouse: Ruth Shaulis (Millie), left, Ray Magsby (Bobby), Maureen Young (Connie), Dawn Kalish (Rachel), and Susie Lowe (Leona).

'Exit Laughing' teases funny bone

BY KIM COOL
FEATURES EDITOR

Susie Lowe, Ruth Shaulis and Maureen Young are together again as old friends Leona, Millie and Connie, whose friend Mary has recently died.

Through Sept. 25, they are in Paul Elliott's "Exit Laughing" at Lemon Bay Playhouse, reprising the roles they played last year at Venice Theatre. The director is Peter

Ivanov and the rest of the cast includes Connie's daughter Rachel, played by Dawn Kalish, and Bobby, played by Ray Magsby.

The play opens at Connie's house where Rachel is upset about being stood up by a fellow college student named Bobby, and Connie is upset at the death of her friend Mary.

It is the night when Connie, Leona, Millie and Mary usually gather

to play bridge, but now their fourth is gone — at least until Millie shows up — with Mary.

As Mary is in what the other girls consider a really ugly urn and has been "borrowed" from the funeral home on the eve of her funeral is upsetting to Connie and Leona, but not to Millie, who thinks that she is better off at Connie's than to be all alone in a funeral parlor the last night before she is to be

buried.

The silliness escalates from there as Connie and Leona try to convince Millie that they might all get into trouble with the police because of what she did.

And then a cop shows up and more one-liners fly across the stage as the silliness escalates all because Mary had made some surprising arrangements before her demise.

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The strength of this presentation owes much to the fact that the three leading ladies are reprising the same roles from a Venice Theatre production. Mary also might have been reprising her role but it was not as easy to recognize the urn and its contents.

Filled with one-liners and all manner of other nonsense, this is a play that can too easily run away from its actors, because of all the silliness. That seems to be what happened to Kalish, who let her character get away from her to the point of being too loud and overly dramatic, something that is all the more noticeable for the tiny 100-seat theater.

Kalish was spot on

as far as her various emotions went but just took them too far.

Magsby was a delight as the pseudo cop sent by Mary to help her friends deal with their loss but also with their aging. To say more about the script could ruin the fun, and that definitely is what this story is all about.

Young has found her niche as a comedy actress as has Shaulis, who is as outrageous in

her emoting as she is attractive. Lowe's part as a hairdresser with a drinking problem and lack of single men in her life is a bit more serious — as if any of the roles in this work can be serious, and she carries it off perfectly.

The set design by Bob LaSalle and Jim Sachonel serves its purpose well. LaSalle also did the sound and lighting.

Lemon Bay Playhouse is the smallest of the

area community theaters, but thanks to a core of dedicated volunteers, it offers plenty of funny diversions most of the year in its 100-seat space.

"Exit Laughing" is the season opener. The theater is at 96 W. Dearborn St., Englewood. For tickets, call the box office at 941-475-6756 or visit: LemonBayPlayhouse.com.

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