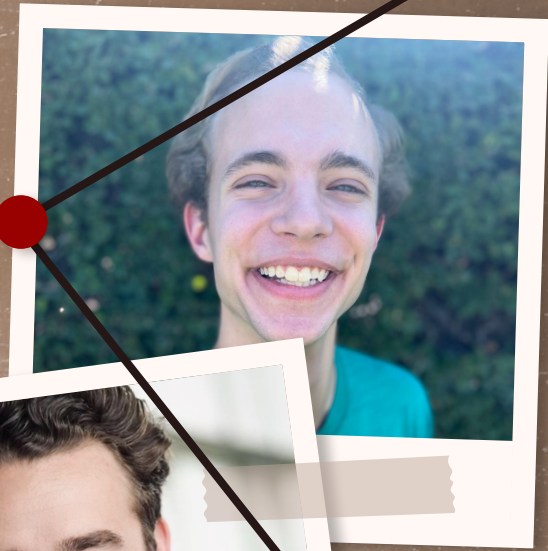


THE MUSICAL COMEDY MURDERS OF 1940 BY JOHN BISHOP

Study Guide prepared by
Caitlin Martin

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JOHN BISHOP

01

WRITER

Had a cynical view of humanity and often wrote of murder and a tortured protagonist
Former Marine

02

DIRECTOR

Circle Repertory Theatre- *The Beaver Coat*, *El Salvador*, *Florida Crackers*

03

WORKS

Stage- *The Trip Back Down*, *Elmer Gantry*, *The Harvesting*
Film- *Drop Zone*, *The Package*

04

EDUCATION

Majored in Theatre at
Carnegie Mellon University

05

FAMILY

Wife of 12 years-Lisa
Kids-Matthew, Michael, and
Christopher from previous
marriage

06

DEATH

Died at age 77 from cancer on
Dec. 20, 2006, in Bad
Heilbrunn, Germany
He was writing a thriller novel



PRODUCTION HISTORY



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CIRCLE REPERTORY

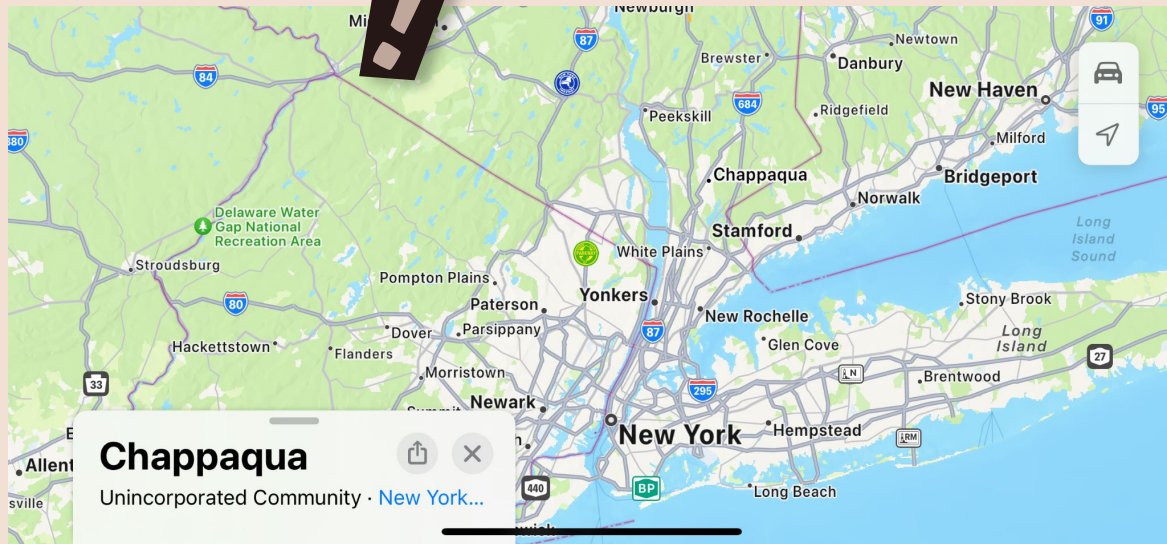
- *The Musical Comedy Murders of 1940* opened in 1987 to mixed reviews before its eventual transfer to Broadway with the same cast
- Bishop directed both productions

BROADWAY

- Played at the Longacre Theatre in 1987
- Had 136 performances from April 6th to August 1st

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CHAPPAQUA, NY

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"THE GREAT WHITE WAY"

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01

GOLDEN AGE

- 1940s start of the golden age
- Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, Rodgers and Hammerstein

02

POPULAR SHOWS

- *Pal Joey* 1940
- *Oklahoma!* 1943
- *Carousel* 1945

03

THEATRE AS ESCAPE

- Variety of settings
- Musicals
- Spectacle

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BACKERS AUDITION

- ❖ Performed in front of a potential backer
- ❖ Producer finds the money, the backer gives the money
- ❖ Shows why they should invest
- ❖ *Oklahoma* had dozens of backer auditions

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01

GERMAN ESPIONAGE

❖ William Sebold- double agent

- 1939 was recruited by the Gestapo
- Went to the American Consulate to work with FBI
- Started his work in New York February of 1940
- 33 spies were arrested



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ESPIONAGE CONTINUED



DREYFUS PAPERS

- Alfred Dreyfus Jewish French Artillery Captain 1894
- Accused of selling secrets to Germany by Major Walsin Esterhazy
- Exonerated in 1906

MOLTKE

- Helmuth Von Moltke
- German Military strategist
- believed in absolute war

COLONEL REDL LETTERS

- Redl worked in the Intelligence Bureau of the Austro-Hungarian General Staff in 1900
- Blackmailed by Russia
- Letter with money found and traced to Redl

HOTZENDORFF MEMO

- Admiral Henning von Holtzendorff
- Chief of Admiralty Staff for Imperial German Navy
- Wrote a memo arguing for unrestricted submarine warfare in 1916

KRUGER TELEGRAM

- William II of Germany sent telegram to the president of British controlled South African Republic
- “Congratulated” them on repelling a raid
- Passive aggressively showed they were isolated

EMMICH

- Otto von Emmich
- German general
- Born April 4, 1848
- Died December 22 1915



WASHINGTON D.C.

- 1940 Franklin Delano Roosevelt elected for his third term
 - Won against Alfred M. Landon, governor of Kansas
- VP Henry Agard Wallace
 - Farmer from Iowa
- Fireside chats
 - To comfort and inform the public
- Women in power
 - First female cabinet member
 - First female circuit court judge
 - First female U.S. minister

POLITICAL CLIMATE

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GREAT DEPRESSION

- 1929-1939
- High unemployment rates
- New Deal

GOOD NEIGHBOR POLICY

- Avoid interfering with Latin America
- Strengthened trade
- Latin American countries eventually joined the WWII

WAR

- 1939-1945
- Aided allied powers
- Officially joined WWII after Pearl Harbor in 1941

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SPECIAL SERVICES DIVISION

- Morale-building agency in the army
- Not limited to theatre, but also athletics, crafts, music, and reading
- Didn't become special services unit until 1943
- Originally called the Morale Division



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PEOPLE

STEPHEN FOSTER

- 1826-1864
- “The father of American Music”

GOWER CHAMPION

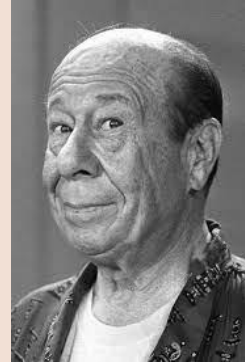
- 1919-1980
- Dancer, actor, choreographer, director- won eight Tonys

GALE SONDERGAARD

- 1899-1985
- First actress to win best supporting role oscar in 1937 for *Anthony Adverse*

BERT LAHR

- 1895-1967
- Cowardly Lion in *The Wizard of Oz*



PEOPLE CONTINUED



ELLERY QUEEN

- Fictional character in detective novels
- First published in 1929
- Co written by Frederick Dannay and Manfred B. Lee



DICK ROGERS

- 1912-1970
- Popular radio singer in the 30s
- Comedian and songwriter



PHIL SPITALNY

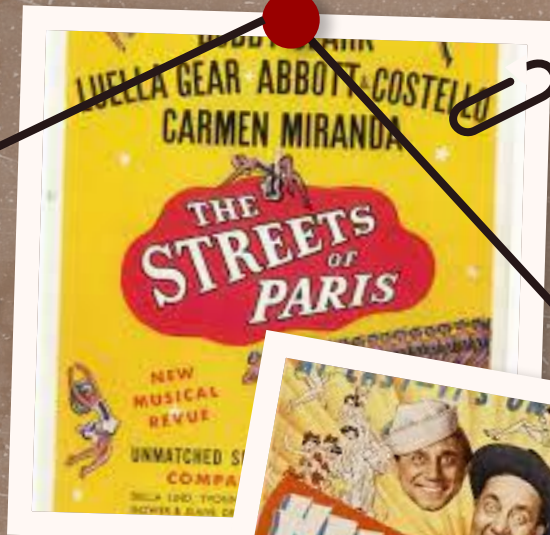
- 1890-1970
- Clarinet prodigy, conductor, and composer



ALICE FAYE

- 1915-1998
- 20th Century Fox
- Star of the 30s and 40s





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MUSICALS

- *Hellzapoppin'* (1938)
 - 1,404 Broadway performances
 - Winter Garden Theatre
 - Musical review written by comedians, Chic Johnson and Ole Olsen
- *Streets of Paris* (1939)
 - 274 Broadway Performances
 - The Broadhurst Theatre
 - Musical revue featuring Bobby Clark, Gower Champion, Lou Costello, and Bud Abbott

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FOOD



SAUERBRATEN

- Sweet and sour pot roast
- National dish of Germany



SCHOKOLADE

- Chocolate

LIEDERKRANZ

- Soft ripened cheese
- Creamy texture and mild flavor



VICHYSOICE

- Chilled soup
- Made with potatoes and leeks

TRANSLATIONS

- **Au Courant -Elsa**
 - Aware (French)
- **Ja gnadige frau -Helsa**
 - Yes Ma'am (German)
- **Ja/Nein**
 - yes/no (German)
- **Ja wohl -Helsa**
 - Yes indeed (German)
- **Das ist eingefroren -Helsa**
 - That is frozen (German)

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VOCABULARY

- Divoon
 - Slang for divine
 - Oo sound more desirable
- Lascivious
 - Feeling or revealing an overt and often offensive sexual desire
- Libidinous
 - Showing excessive sexual drive; lustful
- Licentious
 - Promiscuous and unprincipled in sexual matters
- Soupçon
 - A very small quantity of something

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MISCELLANEOUS

NUMEROLOGY

- The world is dependent on numerical patterns
- The numbers' properties can predict the future, compatible partners, etc.
- Founded by Pythagoras

LES SYLPHIDES

- First abstract ballet
- One act of wood nymphs dancing with a poet
- Chopin composed



SAL HEPATICA

- Bohemian mineral salt
- When dissolved, it produced the taste and effects of bohemian waters
- Laxative and could “cure colds”
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=1wtchk6UEwA>



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