

MAT slates 'Rugburns' dinner theater in Havre, Chinook

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By Tim Leeds and Ryan Welch



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Bonnie Ortner, left, playing Susan Portman, and Anjanett Hawk, who plays Bitsy Barsumi, clash during rehearsal Thursday over a bottle of wine that Bitsy had brought to Bonnie's house party in the play "Rugburns" which is an original play by Jay Pyette. The play, which is a building crescendo of ridiculous and preposterous engagements, runs two hours and opens April 13.

Montana Actors' Theatre is again combining drama and food with fine meals set to be served before three weekends of a locally written dark comedy.

The acting troupe is producing "Rugburns," written by its artistic director, Jay Pyette, starting the weekend of April 13-14 and running the following two weekends.

Pyette, who also is directing the production, said the play is a fast-paced comedy.

"A ludicrous farce where things spin out of control so quickly based on the personalities of the characters," he said.

The play has some mature material, starting with a man - Harold, who owns the house the play is set in - on stage wearing only a dress shirt and underwear, and has partial nudity.

The play revolves around a small scrap of carpet that Harold calls the "argument rug." When one is standing on the rug people must listen to what they have to say and cannot interrupt them. Due to this rug and the personality of the characters things go from bad to worse quickly.

In the opening scene, of the play, Harold Portman - played by Barry Brownlee - is walking around in a dress shirt but with only underwear on under it. While seeing a grown man in his underwear would normally be an odd sight, after only one act of "Rugburns" it becomes just an after thought as the play throws a building crescendo of ridiculous and preposterous engagements at the audience.

The play runs two hours and has seven actors and actresses, playing three couples and one "strange man."

Bonnie Ortner plays Susan Portman, Anjanett Hawk and Ty Hedalen play Bitsy and Tim Barsumi, Grant Olson and Andi Daniel play Phil and Phyllis Phillips and Chad Zuelke plays the strange man.

Along with Pyette, the technical crew includes stage manager Vinnessa Lundstrom and technical operator Oriah Williams.



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Grant Olson, left, playing Phil Phillips, and Barry Brownlee, playing Harold Portman, portraying their characters' confusion and distress.

The play opens April 13-14 at the Havre Eagles Club and returns to that venue the following weekend, April 20-21, then travels to Chinook to perform at the Eagles Club there April 27-28.

The evenings start with no-host cocktails at 6, dinner at 7 and the show starting at 8.

The first weekend, the meal will be flat-iron steak and shrimp, with the meal the second weekend prime rib, followed by a pasta meal the last weekend in Chinook.

Tickets are \$30 each or a reserved table for eight for \$300. They are available online at <http://mtactors.com>, at five head's, Bear Paw Meats and the Computer Center and also at the door.

Pyette said people might want to buy their tickets in advance.

"(We have) limited seating each night, so pre-purchase of tickets is highly encouraged," he said.

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