

AUDITIONS

"Murder on the Orient Express"

Directed by Marc Robinson

Performance dates: October 16, 17, 23 & 24 at 7:30 and October 18 & 25 at 2:00.

Audition Dates: August 2nd from 3:00 to 5:00 and August 3rd from 6:00 to 8:00.

Rehearsals begin: August 24th – 7:00 – 10:00

Location: Downstairs Rehearsal Room - Paradise Center for the Arts – 321 Central, Faribault

All Ethnicities and Gender Identities Encouraged - Ages 15 and above.

About the Show: "Murder on the Orient Express" by Agatha Christie and adapted for the stage by Ken Ludwig. Just after midnight, a snowdrift stops the Orient Express in its tracks. The luxurious train is surprisingly full for the time of the year, but by the morning it is one passenger fewer. An American tycoon lies dead in his compartment, stabbed eight times, his door locked from the inside. Isolated and with a killer in their midst, the passengers rely on detective Hercule Poirot to identify the murderer – in case he or she decides to strike again.

Characters:

HERCULE POIROT

MONSIEUR BOUC

MARY DEBENHAM

HECTOR MACQUEEN

MICHEL THE CONDUCTOR

PRINCESS DRAGOMIROFF

GRETA OHLSSON

COUNTESS ANDRENYI

HELEN HUBBARD

COLONEL ARBUTHNOT

SAMUEL RATCHETT (doubles with Colonel Arbuthnot)

HEAD WAITER (doubles with Michel the Conductor)

Auditioners will be expected to read from the cuttings attached.

Questions Marc Robinson - marcrobinson59@gmail.com

Paradise Community Theater
Auditions for "Murder on the Orient Express"
(Please write clearly)

Name _____

Address _____

Cell _____

Email _____

Is there a particular role/roles that you are interested in?

Would you accept another role? _____yes _____no

Please briefly list your theater experience.

Rehearsals will begin August 24, 2026. Rehearsals will be Monday – Thursdays from 7pm to 10pm. Tech week begins Monday, October 12. Performances are Oct. 16, 17, 23 & 24 at 7:30 and Oct. 18 & 25 at 2:00. If you have any conflicts, please list ALL of them below. Ex. Sporting games and practices, vacations, work, school, bowling, darts, church etc.

...and addresses the audience.)
POIROT. Good evening. The story you are about to witness is one of romance and tragedy, primal murder, and the urge for revenge. What better way to spend a pleasant evening together?

From the beginning it was an odyssey of deception and trickery. One minute I could see the light, like the beam of a train engine hurtling past. The next minute, all was darkness and the thread that I pulled came away in my fingers and led to nothing.

AGATHA CHRISTIE'S MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS 13

I believe it was the greatest case of my career, but who am I to say? Modesty forbids it. It was certainly the most difficult I have ever encountered, and it made me question the very deepest values that I have held since I was a young man.

(Middle Eastern music is heard.)

It began in the exotic city of Istanbul. I planned to vacation there for several days following a trying case that was on my nerves, but things began changing the moment I stepped into the dining room of the world famous Tokatlian Hotel, where the enormity of the prices was matched only by the self-esteem of the waiters. My name, incidentally, is Hercule Poirot and I am a detective.

ARBUTHNOT. I was just exploring a bit. I've never been to Istanbul before and I quite adore all this eastern nonsense.

MARY. Well, I don't. I just want to leave right now and get it over with.

(ARBUTHNOT puts his hand on her cheek.)

ARBUTHNOT. I wish to hell you were out of all this. You deserve better, you know.

MARY. Shh! Not now! No one should see us like this. Not till it's all behind us. Besides, I think we're being observed by that funny little man over there.

(She nods toward POIROT, who is hidden behind his newspaper.)

ARBUTHNOT. What, him? He's just some damned foreigner who probably doesn't even speak English.

(POIROT's newspaper gives an involuntary shake.)

MARY. Shall we order? I'm starving.

ARBUTHNOT. Not here. I found a cute little place around the corner where I'm sure the food will be ten times better.

MARY. But we can't be late for the train! We can't miss it!

ARBUTHNOT. We won't be late, I promise, now stop fussing and come on, let's hurry.

(As they go, we notice MRS. HUBBARD sitting nearby. She is an outspoken American in her fifties, well-dressed with a touch of flamboyance, and she calls to the HEAD WAITER as she rummages through her handbag for her money.)

MRS. HUBBARD. Yoohoo! Excuse me, waiter. You did a very nice job and I'm leaving you something extra because of it.

(At this moment, we notice HECTOR MCQUEEN sitting at one of the tables. He is a nervous

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young American in his thirties with a strained, rather beleaguered face.)

MRS. HUBBARD. Excuse me, young man. Are you American?

MACQUEEN. Y-yes I am.

MRS. HUBBARD. I thought so. I can see from your passport. Us Americans have to stick together, you know. Especially in a place like this. I can't even pronounce half the things on the menu. Can you believe it? And what's a falafafafafafel? I keep seeing them on the street and they look like you could play hockey with 'em.

MACQUEEN. I believe they're made of fried chickpeas.

MRS. HUBBARD. Well there ya go. Who knew? Some people will fry anything. By the way, I don't mean to snoop but I see your train ticket sitting there on the table and I wonder - do you know if they're providing a bus to the station?

MACQUEEN. I don't think so. I-I believe the hotel has a private car.

MRS. HUBBARD. Well don't you worry, I'll ask and find out. As the Bible says, "If Moses doesn't know the answer, ask the concierge." Now I better go. I think I'm annoying that odd little man with the silly moustache. *(Sotto voce.)* And I don't think it's real.

(As MACQUEEN and MRS. HUBBARD exit, MONSIEUR BOUC enters. He sees POIROT, his face lights up and he chuckles happily. He taps POIROT on the shoulder. BOUC is another Belgian, a young middle-aged man of good humor.)

BOUC. I hope that the food at this humble establishment is up to your usual standards.

POIROT. What? What's this? ... Ah, *mon Dieu*, it is Monsieur Bouc!

BOUC. My friend! Haha!

POIROT. *Mon ami!* But what are you doing here?

BOUC. What am I doing here? This is my city! I live here!

POIROT. Of course, I'm a fool!

BOUC. I run Wagon-Lit, the greatest train company in the entire world, and the central office is in this hotel. *Garçon!* This meal is on me, please charge my office.

POIROT. *Ah non.*

BOUC. *Ah oui.* It will give me pleasure, you are my guest here. So tell me, what are you doing here? You are solving a crime, eh?

POIROT. No, no, I did that last week in Syria. It was a bad affair. An army officer, a missing check, a beautiful woman, puh. It did not end well.

(As POIROT describes the case, a MAN appears in a blue down light, wearing an army tunic and an officer's hat. We are witnessing POIROT's memory.)

The man was guilty, that was certain. But perhaps, because I pressed the man too hard to admit his guilt...

(The MAN raises a pistol to his temple and fires. Bang! The noise is startling. The MAN collapses and fades away.)

It was unfortunate in the extreme. And yet I believe I did nothing wrong.

BOUC. Of course you did nothing wrong. If you break the law you must pay the price. That is what *you* have told me.

POIROT. It is what I live by.

BOUC. Now tell me, you are staying here at the hotel?

POIROT. I was hoping, eh? I was going to play the tourist, but at the desk there was a telegram from Scotland Yard, begging me to return at once, so I have asked the concierge to get me a ticket for tonight on your famous Orient Express.

BOUC. There will be no problem, and the best news is, I will be joining you, for I go to Lausanne tonight on business.

POIROT. Haha! *C'est magnifique.*

(The HEAD WAITER approaches POIROT.)

HEAD WAITER. *Pardon, monsieur.* The concierge said to tell you there are no more first class tickets for the Express tonight. It is sold out.

POIROT. *Ah non!*

BOUC. *Attends.* It is my train and it is never sold out at this time of year. That is ridiculous.

HEAD WAITER. It must be a party, or a convention, perhaps.

BOUC. Well, you tell the concierge to find a berth for *Monsieur Poirot*. He is my personal friend.

HEAD WAITER. But *monsieur* –

BOUC. The number seven is always available. It is held in reserve. Now go tell him!

HEAD WAITER. Right away, *monsieur*.

(*He exits.*)

POIROT. *Merci.*

BOUC. It is nothing. A gesture. Now you see this menu? Throw it away. Tonight we shall sit on the train together, just like old times, and we will dine like kings.

POIROT. The food on the train, it is edible?

BOUC. *Monsieur Poirot!* You stab me in the heart! I am writhing on the ground at your feet! It is not a mere train that will carry you tonight, it is a legend. It runs like no other vehicle on the earth. The fittings are from Paris, the paneling Venice, the plates are from Rome, and the taps from New York. The best food, the best beds, the best pillows, the best feathers inside the pillows. It is poetry on wheels, and Lord Byron himself could not write it better. *Monsieur*, prepare yourself. In one hour, I will meet you on the platform of the Orient Express.

(Suddenly we hear the "Vorwärts Drängend" passage from Mahler's Symphony No. 1. The dining room disappears, the scene changes, and the ominous, powerful music takes us into the train station at Istanbul.)

Scene Three

(The platform is full of steam and smoke and is throbbing with activity. In the background we glimpse the sleek, shining body of the Orient Express gleaming with romance. The greatest train in the world is about to accept its passengers and sail out of the station.)

(At the center of the activity is MICHEL, the conductor. He is a good looking Frenchman, about forty, with a quiet, almost grave sense of humor. He has a clipboard in hand listing the names and compartments of the passengers. Meanwhile, we hear an announcement over the loudspeaker.)

ANNOUNCER. *Messieurs et mesdames, l'Orient Express partira dans vingt minutes du quai numero dix. Veuillez faire attention aux marches, soyez prudent et bon voyage.* Ladies and gentlemen, the Orient Express will depart in twenty minutes from platform ten. Please watch your step and have a safe trip.

(Bells and whistles sound as PRINCESS DRAGOMIROFF enters like a galleon in full sail with a woman named GRETA OHLSSON in her wake. The PRINCESS is in her seventies. She is Russian, expensively dressed and heavily bejeweled. GRETA, by contrast, is Swedish, with a Swedish accent. She is in her thirties and plain. There is a frightened, sheep-like quality about her. She is carrying three or four suitcases and struggles with them.)

PRINCESS. Greta, will you please put those suitcases down, you are driving me mad!

GRETA. No, no, princess, do not have concern, they are not so heavy as they look. I am sure.

PRINCESS. They are extremely heavy!

MICHEL. Princess Dragomiroff. How lovely to see you.
(*To GRETA.*) Please, let me help you, *madame*.

(*MICHEL relieves GRETA of the luggage.*)

GRETA. It iss *mademoiselle*. I am not married, except to God almighty who lives in heaven.

(*She crosses herself.*)

PRINCESS. Oh Greta please, not *now*. (*To MICHEL.*) This is Greta Ohlsson.

GRETA. I am a missionary and I verk in Africa with little babies.

PRINCESS. I have agreed to pay her way if she will assist me as I travel to Paris.

MICHEL. But your usual companion, Miss Schmidt -?

GRETA. She iss very sick.

PRINCESS. The doctors are calling it a cardiac event, but she is German so it is very unlikely to slow her down.

GRETA. I vill pray for Miss Schmidt and God vill protect her.

PRINCESS. Greta, please, that is enough, just get on the train.

MICHEL. You are in compartment eleven, princess, as usual.
(*To GRETA.*) And Miss Ohlsson, you are sharing with a Miss Mary Debenham in compartment four.

(*MARY enters, dressed stylishly.*)

MARY. I'm Miss Debenham.

MICHEL. Ah, *mademoiselle*. You will be sharing with Miss Ohlsson here.

GRETA. I vill do my very best so I am not disturbing you.

MARY. Oh, I'm sure we'll get along just fine.

(*At which moment, SAMUEL RATCHETT appears. He's a middle-aged American businessman, brusque, unforgiving, with a threatening demeanor, and a whiplash of a voice.*)

RATCHETT. *Hector!*

there is noise and crying and animals and oh! And I look up from my book and sitting there next to me, right on the seat, is a very old goat. Haha. Is true. *Old goat!* He is like my companion. And on this trip that we are taking together right now, I think it will not be so different, *ja?*

(GRETA exits. The PRINCESS reacts and follows her off as POIROT enters, followed by RATCHETT, who is trying to catch up with him.)

RATCHETT. Mr. Poirot, slow up! Now I'd like to discuss that proposition I mentioned.

POIROT. *Non, non*, I'm afraid it is not a good time.

RATCHETT. Oh sure it is. Sit down. I'll be quick, I promise.

POIROT. I am afraid -

RATCHETT. Sit down.

POIROT. ... *Eh bien*. Proceed.

RATCHETT. Now I want you to take on a job for me.

POIROT. I take on few new cases.

RATCHETT. You'll take this one on, I guarantee it.

POIROT. And why is that?

RATCHETT. Because I'm talkin' big money here. Mr. Poirot, I have an enemy.

POIROT. I would guess that you have several enemies.

RATCHETT. Now what is *that* supposed to mean?

POIROT. You are successful, *n'est-ce pas?* Successful people have many enemies.

RATCHETT. Right. That's it exactly! You see I've been getting some threatening letters lately and I want an extra pair of eyes to do some snoopin' around. And that's what you do, am I right? Snoopin'? Of course, I can take care of myself.

(He flashes the gun under his coat.)

But I'll pay you five thousand dollars. How does that sound?

POIROT. *Non*.

RATCHETT. All right, ten. For a few days' work.

POIROT. I am not for sale, *monsieur*. I have been very fortunate in my profession and I now take only such cases as interest me – and frankly, you do not interest me.

RATCHETT. You want me to grovel, is that it?

POIROT. I want nothing, *monsieur*, except to leave.

(POIROT exits. RATCHETT is darkly unhappy. He stomps his foot. After a beat, the COUNTESS enters, passing through. She nods as she tries to go past him.)

COUNTESS. Pardon me. Sorry.

RATCHETT. Hey, you're that countess, aren't you?

COUNTESS. That is correct.

RATCHETT. Well, you're awful pretty. And from what I hear, you were a commoner to start with, just like the rest of us.

COUNTESS. That is also correct.

RATCHETT. So does that mean you'll have a drink with me?

COUNTESS. I am married, *monsieur*. My husband is having business elsewhere. Please excuse me.

RATCHETT. Now not so fast.

(The COUNTESS looks up sharply, but he's blocking her way. There is something threatening about him.)

COUNTESS. Move out of the way, please.

RATCHETT. Hey, you don't need to get all high and mighty about it.

COUNTESS. If you do not move this second I will scream.

RATCHETT. *Just wait a minute!* You've said that you're unattached at the moment, and we are on a train, so who the hell's gonna know what happens in some private room on some two-bit piece o' –