The Game’s Afoot brings murder and mirth to BCS

By Gordon Lambie
LENNOXVILLE

The BCS Players, an extracurricular gathering of theatrically inclined students from Bishop’s College School, will be offering three presentations of playwright Ken Ludwig’s 2011 play The Game’s Afoot, starting this evening and running until Saturday night. Hailed as a “wonderfully appealing seasonal murder mystery” by BCS drama teacher Dan Rae, the play will be the result of hours of hard work by the cast of eight and supporting crew of 14.

Rae, calling Ludwig one of the best playwrights working today, hailed the script’s blend of 1936 Connecticut charm with modern sensibilities.

“It follows the classic Agatha Christie or Conan Doyle murder elements, but having been written in 2011, it has sort of a modern, ironic sensibility to it,” the drama teacher said. “It’s a lovely combination of old and new.”

The play is set in the home of real-life famed actor William Gillette. Gillette was very famous in the ’20s and ’30s for creating Sherlock Holmes plays with the blessing of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle himself. On Christmas Eve, while recovering from an attempted murder, Gillette sees his home become a crime scene and must use some of Sherlock’s skills to unmask the murderer in an investigation that proves to be full of both frightening and funny twists and turns.

“My catchphrase is: ‘you’ll scream out loud, you’ll laugh out loud,’” Rae shared. “It’s dramatic at some points but there’s a funny twist that makes it light hearted at the same time,” said student actress Michelle Rasidescu. “It’s not too heavy.”

Rasidescu explained that she is the senior member of the cast, having been in three past productions with the BCS Players, but said that this is her first-ever murder mystery.

“The whole story is so intense and funny at the same time.” The student said, sharing that her favourite part has been working to keep the solution to the mystery a secret. “It’s been really fun.”

Asked what inspired this particular performance, Rae explained that his guiding principle in script choice is very simple.

“There’s no formula; if I think we can do it, we do it. I try to do plays that capture my imagination,” the drama teacher said. “We’ve done about 25 productions since I got here, and my favourite one is always the one I’m working on.”

Rae spoke with great admiration for the 22 students who have committed to the extracurricular project, pointing out that all makeup and technical organization of the show, from the stagehands to the lighting and sound, is student-led.

“The kids are very busy at this school, so for them to do theatre on top of everything else they do is really quite a commitment,” Rae said. “But they do a great job, and they do it because they love doing theatre.”

The Game’s Afoot opens tonight and runs through Saturday, at 7:30 p.m. each night, in the R. Lewis Evans Memorial Theatre at BCS, 80 Moulton Hill Road in Lennoxville. Tickets are $10 for students and $12 for adults and can be reserved by calling 819-566-0227 during school hours (Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.).