

INTERACTIVE MYSTERIES AS 'REGULAR' PRODUCTIONS

More and more theatre groups are including our interactive mysteries on their regular season. And why not? Mysteries have already proven to be a popular draw for fund raisers and special events. With a little creativity, they can be staged just as easily as any other production. In fact, we think our mysteries are EASIER to mount. And cheaper! And, because most of our shows do not involve a set, it's even very possible to do one 'in rep' with another production. Just add some lines that explain the other set. (We did a production on the set of *Joseph and The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* and made one character an amateur Egyptologist!)

The following describes some of the issues that may arise when transitioning from the usual play format to an interactive one. Following that, I've listed our scripts with the logistical specifics of each. Finally, you will find an individual script ordering form.

NOTE: You will see "Production Manual" referenced throughout. This is sent with the First Production Packet and provides complete instructions for staging our shows, including adapting to locations and timeframes.

1. Even though mysteries have become almost synonymous with "dinner theatre" our shows can and ARE being staged in a standard theatre environment - lobby, stage, etc. You do NOT have to serve a meal - although you may want to have more than the usual Intermission refreshments - desserts, perhaps. Because you aren't serving a meal, you don't have to worry about the cost and trouble of that. There is an audience out there who would LOVE to do 'one of those mystery things' but don't like dinner theatre. (Yeah, yeah, I know - I can't figure it either but I've been told by enough people that I believe it.) Plus, without food, tickets can be cheaper, thereby opening it up to those on a restricted budget (which includes most of us right now!)

2. Another issue is space/venue. Most interactive mysteries involve moving around/circulating/mingling and not all theatres have space for that. When doing our shows as dinner theatre, we usually have 30-45 minutes of pre-show with characters circulating among the audience. The actors use this time to set up relationships and provide background and generally 'work' the room. Likewise, after the play section of the show, the actors circulate to answer questions, and there may be a clue hunt. It is entirely possible to do both of these "circulations" in a limited space. Instead of everyone moving around, the audience remains in their seats and the actors do the circulating. OR you can take half the audience to the lobby to interrogate half the suspects and have refreshments, while those still in the theatre question the remaining suspects. After 20 minutes or so, the groups switch places. We've even had some groups that, weather permitting, went

outside for mingling.

3. Here's a concern I get a lot - "Can we do a different ending? We're doing 4 performances and we don't want the ending to be given away!"

We do have shows with multiple endings: *MURDER, MEDIUM-RARE*; *CRITICAL REVIEW*; and *MY FATAL VALENTINE*. For these, the audience votes for the guilty one and that character's 'ending' is the one that's played. But the rest of our shows are pretty carefully crafted - I think! - so that the only solution that really makes sense is the one that's written.

All that being said, in 20+ years of doing interactive mysteries, this has NOT been a problem for us. People just don't reveal the ending to friends any more than they'd give away the ending of a movie or book. Probably less, because their friends would kill them if they did! If this is still a worry, the newly revised Production Manual has a cute li'l secrecy oath that can be administered at the end of the performance.

4. There are real mystery buffs who don't think you can really get to 'know' the characters unless you've spent 3 hours with them. To that, I politely and respectfully say - bunk! One way that we set up some our events is with a program. First of all, it gives the time frame so folks know what to expect. Secondly, it can be used to describe the back story and give hints. I'm assuming that most theatre groups already distribute programs, so this isn't anything new, although you may want to include times. On the next pages are two examples of interactive mystery programs. The first one is for a recent dinner theatre fund raiser of *HONEYMOON FROM HELL* (retitled *CRUISE INTO MURDER*). The second is a program for the same show, minus dinner and clue hunt.

CRUISE INTO . . .

MURDER!!

Welcome Aboard!!

6:00 – Cocktails
50/50 tickets go on sale

7:00 – Dinner

8:00 - Talent Show!

9:00
Clue Hunt

9:45
Dessert and deliberations

10:00
Oral Auction

10:15
Solution Scene
Prizes

"Cruise Into Murder" is presented by
MYSTERIES BY MOUSHEY, INC.
To find out about upcoming productions, or to inquire
about hiring us, visit our website:
www.mysteriesbymoushey.com

For tonight, pretend you are not at Acker - Moore but aboard the honey-moon cruise liner, the S.S. Amore. It is the last night of the cruise, which is traditionally TALENT NIGHT. Report to Gina, the cruise director, to enter the competition.

Everything has not been smooth sailing aboard the Amore this trip. You may be able to help avert further disaster. Be observant, get to know the crew and your fellow passengers. And be warned - aboard the Amore anything can happen.

And probably will.

CRUISE INTO . . .

MURDER!!

Welcome Aboard!!

7:30 – Doors Open
Pick up your tickets.
Sign up for the Talent Show!

8:00 – Talent Show!

9:00 - Collect physical evidence
Intermission
Question suspects
Enjoy refreshments

9:30 - Detection Election
Cast your ballot for who you think 'dunit'!

9:45 - Solution Scene
Cast Introduction
Prizes
Oral Auction

10:15
Solution Scene
Prizes

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TIME FRAME

Using our scripts/format, you can stage an interactive mystery within the framework and constraints of a regular performance. The following timeframe does not include a Clue Hunt. However, it is very easy to include one - if you have space at your location. The Production Manual has an entire section on Clue Hunts and how to adapt for time and space constraints.

- 7:30 - Doors open. (NOTE: Be very sure that you include, in all promotions - when the mystery begins. Audience members need to be there for pre-show.) Characters interact with the audience and set up their relationships, the plot, etc. This can be done in the lobby - everyone just mingles. Or it can be done in the 'house' itself. Programs are distributed and beverages/snacks may be sold or given out.
- 8:00 - The Play - Act One. This part of our shows runs about an hour, max. And several scripts have short versions that run about 20 minutes. During the Play, someone usually winds up very . . .um. . .dead and there is physical evidence that needs to be found. At the end of the Play, the Host/Hostess explains how the physical evidence will be distributed and how solutions will be collected. NOTE: The easiest way to do this is with ballots - a Detection Election! Most of the scripts include the Host/Hostess directions, and it's extremely easy to adapt. The Production Manual has samples of various ways to do balloting.
- 9:00 - Intermission. Some kind of refreshments is usually in order and characters are available for questioning. You will want to allow more than the usual Intermission time. A variation - if your lobby is small, or nonexistent - is to have the audience remain in the house and, raising hands, question the suspects onstage.
- 9:30 - When questioning is winding down, audience members are ushered back into the theatre. As they enter, each is given a ballot. The suspects are in front of the stage, holding ballot boxes or gift bags. Audience members write their own names on the ballot and place it in the gift box of the suspect they believe is guilty.
- 9:40 - Solution scene, intro cast, prizes. If doing prizes, draw from the correct box/bag. NOTE: Prizes don't have to be big ticket items - free passes to a future show, a t-shirt or mug - that kind of thing. You can even make up certificates "I solved (insert title) at (insert theatre name)." If you think it necessary, administer a secrecy oath.
- 10:00 - Out the door!

2009 MYSTERY SCRIPT DESCRIPTIONS

To purchase individual scripts, use the order form that follows descriptions.

- * Indicates scripts that are particularly suited to a regular theatrical 'run.'
- Indicates scripts that are probably harder to adapt.

Some scripts contain short versions in addition to the regular length.

NOTE: For the scripts that use photos or other graphics as the physical evidence you have several options:

- reproduce digitally and distribute
- enlarge & post on a wall or screen
- use a tv or computer or other monitor.

1. ALL MY MURDERS. The daytime drama, *The Day After Tomorrow*, is full of the usual - blackmail, kidnapping, and alien abductions. A real murder almost stops the show. 3m/5f Physical evidence is a photograph. This show requires more of a set than others - it's supposed to be a night club. Can easily be done without walls, using set pieces and furniture. But it may not work as easily in 'rep' with another show.

2. AUDITION FOR MURDER Auditions for movie "extras" turn very, very deadly. 4m/3f Physical evidence is a photograph. Does not require a set.

* **3. MURDER IN BLACK AND WHITE** 1 audience member is dead. 3 have "close calls." What do they all have in common? 4m/4f The physical evidence consists of items on a shopping list. Very easy to reproduce the list and pass out. Does not require a set. Script contains short version. All promotion must encourage audience members to come dressed in black and/or white and you must be prepared to award prizes for the Best Individual Male and Female Costume.

4. BLOODHOUNDS! A perfect Halloween mystery, this show features the world's first vampire detectives. 4m/3f There is a vampire's lair that contains important physical evidence. You can set up the lair with a coffin and the other clues in another location and let audience members file view it. OR you can take a photo of it and provide those to the audience. Set is bits and pieces - tables, chairs.

- **5. MURDER, AT THE COMPANY PARTY** Roy "Takeover" Tackett crashes your company event. But this will be his last dirty trick. 5m/3f Physical evidence is a poison pen letter. Difficult to do without dinner.

- **6. MURDER, COUNTRY STYLE** The Stumpp Family Singers' biggest hit is "Roadkill." Could that be prophetic? 5m/3f The physical evidence is a 'cover letter' to a hitman contract. This one HAS to be in pieces as the meaning changes,

depending on how it is arranged. Which means that you have to give out multiple slips of paper to each person, which could be awkward. Set is mostly 'dressing' - farm/country pieces.

7. DEAD AND DEADER The actress whose death halted production of this horror film has been replaced. Or has she? 3m/4f The physical evidence is a page of a diary. Set calls for a throne and other specific pieces.

* **8. THE DEATH OF DR. PEPPER** Three women claim to be Dr. Pepper's wife and he can't identify her because he's, well. . .you know. 3m/3f Physical evidence is a letter. No set.

* **9. THE GHOST OF JEB TAYLOR** Jeb Taylor's unsolved murder was 150 years ago. But the trail heats up again when the ghostly suspects return to see justice done! 9m/6f Physical evidence is a map of the location of the murder and environs. This one has a brief scene which sets up the plot and introduces the characters. Each character then has his/her own story to tell about the fateful night. They can do that in front of the entire audience or by circulating. No set, but requires period costumes.

* **10. THE FATAL FIFTIES AFFAIR** The reunion tour of the cast from the 50's sitcom, Make Way For Winky, turns homicidal. 2m/4f Physical evidence - notes for a proposed tell-all book. Set is chairs and a coffee table.

* **11. MY FATAL VALENTINE** The "Loveknot Awards Show" for romance writers leads to a murder where almost anyone could be guilty. This mystery has multiple-endings. 3m/8f. No physical evidence, no set.

12. FUNERAL FOR A GANGSTER It's 1928 and the Mob sendoff to the late Vito "The Gut" Marzetti. Unfortunately, Vito's not the only one who'll be laid to rest! 3m/2f Physical evidence - clues to the hidden location of a very important key. Requires a piano and a coffin - OR a very large urn for the 'ashes.'

13. THE HAUNTING An elopement of 100 years ago was cut short by murder. The ghosts return - even the victim! 5m/3f Physical evidence is a love letter. This is a mystery that relies on being able to speak closely with all suspects. Works best with audiences of 75 or less. No set, but works best in an atmospheric environment.

* **14. HONEYMOON FROM HELL** It's the last night aboard the S.S. Amore, a not-so-luxurious cruise ship. And "murder" is on the passenger list! 4m/3f Physical evidence is a newspaper clue. No set, beyond whatever you want to do for dressing.

15. MURDER IN 3-D Everyone involved in the 3-D film, "In Your Face", gathers to examine the murder that ended production. 3m/3f Physical evidence is a

graphic of the scene of the crime. No set.

16. MURDER, MEDIUM-RARE A famous entertainment guru and cookbook author finds that not everyone is a fan! A recipe for a mystery with multiple endings! 5m/3f No physical evidence. However, since most of the characters work in a restaurant, it's usually done with dinner.

***17. PAJAMA PARTY MURDERS** Bartholomew Cosmo's heirs must spend (and survive!) the night in order to inherit his hidden treasure! 3m/4f Physical evidence is a poem that contains clues to the location of the treasure. Needs a set, although that can be accomplished through set pieces and furniture rather than flats.

18. PHANTOM OF THE (your location) The preview of a new "Phantom" is in town. And SOMEONE is not happy about that at all! 4m/3f Physical evidence is a newspaper fragment. No set is required, but a piano or keyboard is!

***19. REUNION AT HIPPIY HIGH** Even hippies go to their class reunion. Only at this reunion, one of the flower children winds up dead! 4m/4f Script contains short version. Physical evidence is a yearbook page. Set is comprised of pieces reminiscent of a high school glee club classroom - risers, etc.

****20. SEANCE AT THE (your location)** Madame Zodiak, world famous astrologer, is murdered before our eyes. 2m/3f The "physical evidence" isn't really that at all. Madame dies after being poisoned and the source could be her chewing gum, throat spray, or any of the other oral fixations she demonstrated in full view of the audience! This one works especially well as the script includes an optional scene wherein the detective uses audience members to 'test' each of these things. No set besides podium and chairs.

***21. WAKE THE DEAD** Patrick Joseph Patrick died of natural causes. The next victim won't be so lucky. An Irish murder-mystery. 4m/3w The physical evidence in this show is the scene of the crime. This can either be set up in a different location for the audience to view OR a photo can be used. There are also important questions to ask each suspect. These can be planted on certain seats and asked in front of all OR given out. Requires a coffin and chairs.

22. WEDDING FROM HELL Bruce and Tina just want to get married. But everything that can go wrong does. The ultimate faux pas? A murder, of course! 5m/4f Script contains short version. Physical evidence is 3 photos. I would suggest foregoing printing and distributing (could be awkward handling all that) and instead show them on computers and/or television monitor.

***23. THE GREAT HIGH SCHOOL WHODUNIT** Audience members "become" students at Dudley High. The school's benefactress, Mrs. Dudley, is furious when her fabulous ring is stolen. The "students" must solve the mystery! Can be with murder or without. 7m8f Physical evidence is a poem. No set.

***24. THE CURSE OF THE HOPELESS DIAMOND** The world's best detectives must protect Reggie Potter (and his bimbo wife) from the Curse of the Potter Diamond! 4m/3f Script contains short version. Physical evidence is a newspaper clue. No set.

25. MURDER BY MAGIC The ghosts of vaudeville magicians haunt your venue. Can Simone the Psychic contact the ghosts? 4m/2f Physical evidence is a memo. Needs to be done in an atmospheric location.

***26. WIN, LOSE OR DIE!** Lyrical Pursuit rewards contestants' knowledge of lyrics. Will this be the current champ's final round? 4m/2f Physical evidence is a poem. There needs to be some semblance of a game show set - a panel for contestants, that kind of thing. And you need to use live music. Overall, though, it actually works better on a stage!

- 27. THE LAST DANCE OF DR. DISCO Is Dr. Disco planning more than dancing at his club? Could this be "Saturday Night FATAL"? 3m/4f Physical evidence is a note with a hidden message within it. The hidden message can only be discovered by placing a template over the note. This is called a Cardano Grill and is easily the coolest clue we've ever done! However, it may be a bit much for audience members to juggle with programs, etc. Requires the trappings of a Disco Club - rain curtain, special lighting, etc.

***28. CRITICAL REVIEW** A critic pays the ultimate penalty for years of nasty, malicious, and just plain unfair reviews. There are enough suspects for multiple endings! 3m/4f No physical evidence, set.

***29. TROUBLE AT THE TALENT SHOW** Before the school talent show is over, one entrant ends up out of contention. 5m/13f/5 that can be either. Size of cast and genders are flexible. Physical evidence is the front page of the school newspaper. No set.

-30. REALITY BITES BACK The contestants on "Beyond Endurance" have one more challenge. Outwit, outlast and OUTLIVE. 4m/3f Physical evidence is a magazine article. Because of audience activity and movement within the play section, this may not be the easiest show to adapt.

If you still have questions, or want some more advice, please don't hesitate to contact us!

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Individual Scripts

Use this form if you are ordering scripts to read before deciding upon a production.

If you need scripts for a production, use a Production Order Form.

ALL SCRIPT SALES ARE FINAL.

#	TITLE	QTY	EACH	TOTAL
1	ALL MY MURDERS		\$6.00	
2	AUDITION FOR MURDER		\$6.00	
3	MURDER IN BLACK AND WHITE		\$6.00	
4	BLOODHOUNDS!		\$6.00	
5	MURDER AT THE COMPANY PARTY		\$6.00	
6	MURDER, COUNTRY STYLE		\$6.00	
7	DEAD AND DEADER		\$6.00	
8	THE DEATH OF DR. PEPPER		\$6.00	
9	THE GHOST OF JEB TAYLOR		\$6.00	
10	THE FATAL FIFTIES AFFAIR		\$6.00	
11	MY FATAL VALENTINE		\$6.00	
12	FUNERAL FOR A GANGSTER		\$6.00	
13	THE HAUNTING		\$6.00	
14	HONEYMOON FROM HELL		\$6.00	
15	MURDER IN 3-D		\$6.00	
16	MURDER, MEDIUM-RARE		\$6.00	
17	PAJAMA PARTY MURDERS		\$6.00	
18	PHANTOM OF (your location)		\$6.00	
19	REUNION AT HIPPIE HIGH		\$6.00	
20	SEANCE AT (your location)		\$6.00	
21	WAKE THE DEAD		\$6.00	
22	WEDDING FROM HELL		\$6.00	
23	THE GREAT HIGH SCHOOL WHODUNIT		\$6.00	
24	THE CURSE OF THE HOPELESS DIAMOND		\$6.00	
25	MURDER, BY MAGIC		\$6.00	
26	WIN, LOSE, OR DIE!		\$6.00	
27	THE LAST DANCE OF DR. DISCO		\$6.00	
28	CRITICAL REVIEW		\$6.00	
29	TROUBLE AT THE TALENT SHOW		\$6.00	
30	REALITY BITES BACK!		\$6.00	

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1 - 3 scripts	\$ 3.00
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7 - 10 scripts	\$ 7.00
11 - 15 scripts	\$ 9.00
16 - 20 scripts	\$11.00
21 - 25 scripts	\$13.00

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