

SVCT brings door-slamming comedy to local stage

Scottish hitmen, inept cops and 'door-ography' featured in 'An Unnecessary Farce'

By [Calvin Nuttall](#)

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Pictured are "An Unnecessary Farce" cast members Sarah Birdsall (playing Karen) and Al Jafari (playing Eric).

Photo: Chris Foster

Mistaken identities, slamming doors and a Scottish hitman in a kilt are just a few of the comedic elements audiences can expect in South Valley Civic Theater's upcoming production of "An Unnecessary Farce," opening April 26.

The plot revolves around two inept police officers conducting a sting operation to catch a mayor who is suspected of embezzling funds. They set up in a hotel room with video surveillance equipment to monitor an adjoining room where an accountant interviews the mayor.

"They're trying to catch him on tape admitting that he is embezzling funds," director Allie Bailey said. "Through a series of unfortunate events, insanity ensues."

Those events include the addition of a Scottish hitman, a security guard, an unexpected love story and what Bailey delicately refers to as "some mild nudity."

Eshani More stars as Billie, a rookie cop who hasn't quite mastered essential policing skills.

"Billie is a new cop. She really wants to be a real, official cop," Bailey explains. "She's intelligent, but some of the skills that you need to be a cop, she hasn't quite mastered. Using a gun, using handcuffs, driving a car—she hasn't quite mastered those skills. She carries a water gun instead of a pistol."

More describes her character as "genuinely just trying her best" despite being set up to fail.



Pictured is the cast of South Valley Civic Theater's upcoming production of "An Unnecessary Farce."

Photo: Chris Foster

“She is really trying with everything that she is to live up to these expectations that she has of herself in her heart of hearts,” More says. “She definitely is just a huge optimist. There is nothing that can get her down, and that is the personality trait that I see coming out the strongest from her.”

Daniel Zafer-Joyce plays Todd, the Scottish hitman who complicates matters further.

“Todd is a hitman. He is very dangerous,” Zafer-Joyce says. “He wears a kilt when he kills people. He is unintelligible when he’s angry and speaks with a very thick Scottish accent that you, as the audience, are not meant to understand.”

Zafer-Joyce describes his character as “a character from a straight drama who wandered into a farce and has no idea where he is.”

“He keeps trying to be in control, but of course it’s a farce, so everything keeps going wrong,” he said. “Todd has stepped into a whirlwind of crazy and is coming to terms with what he is supposed to do about it. All of the usual things that work in an action movie—the intimidation tactics, the threats—they just fall flat.”

A key comedic element involves timing and the show’s many doors, which Bailey jokingly refers to as “door-ography.”

“It’s a farce, meaning there are a lot of doors,” said director Allie Bailey. “There are eight doors in the show, which is a lot. Typically, farces have a lot of people running in and out of rooms and through doors. Our unique challenge is managing which door is open and which door is closed. That is what we call ‘door-ography.’”

Bailey emphasizes that despite the slapstick elements, the characters are fully developed.

“These characters are written as full, robust people that have goals and motivations, they’re not just caricatures,” she said. “Comedy is rooted in truth, and there is a lot of truth to the story.”

She also notes the play’s progressive approach to female characters.

“There are very powerful female characters in the show. The women aren’t the butt of the joke, which is lovely, because sometimes that is the case,” Bailey says. “This one is a bit more modern. It delves into the fact that women can be sexual creatures and desire intimacy, and that is not bad.”

Zafer-Joyce compares the play’s style to the sitcom “Frasier” but notes that “An Unnecessary Farce” brings something fresh to the genre.

“Even for a farce, it is unique; it is almost self-aware of its genre in a really pleasant way,” he says. “It is not hackneyed or old-fashioned, it is clever. I think it does a really good job of catering to the slapstick physical comedy while also being very intelligent.”

Bailey believes the production offers something valuable in today’s world.

“I think that’s the great part of the show. You’re like, ‘Oh, I feel really bad for these people, what else can go wrong?’ and then it does,” she said. “I think we all need to laugh in this day and age. These actors are so talented and gifted, and they’re working so hard, and because they’re so good and so truthful, you just can’t help but laugh.”