



Murder for Two

Enrichment Guide

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Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre is proud to call Manitoba home. Royal MTC is located in Winnipeg on Treaty 1, the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Anishinew, and Dakota people, and the National Homeland of the Red River Métis. We are thankful for the benefits sharing this land has afforded us, acknowledge the responsibilities of the Treaties, and embrace the opportunity to partner with Indigenous communities in the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.

The Role of the Audience

Theatre needs its audience! We are happy to have you here. Every staff person, actor, and crew member backstage plays an important part in your experience, and you also have a role in the experience of cast, crew and the people around you.

Arrive Early: Please make sure you give yourself enough time to find your seat before the performance starts. Latecomers may not be admitted to a performance. We ask schools and other groups to arrive at least 20-30 minutes before the show.

Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices: Please **turn off** your cell phone/mp3 player /gaming system/camera/smart watch. Texting, surfing, and gaming during performances is very distracting for the performers and other audience members. Using cameras and recording devices during a performance is **never** allowed.

Talking During the Performance: Even when you whisper, you can be heard by performers and people around you. Unless it is a relaxed performance, disruptive patrons will be removed from the theatre. Please wait until after the performance to share your words with others.

Food/Drinks: Food and outside drinks are not allowed in the theatre. When there is an intermission, snacks and drinks may be available for purchase. There is complimentary water in the lobby.

Dress: There is no dress code at the Royal MTC, but we respectfully ask you not to wear hats in the theatre. We strive to be a scent-free environment and thank all patrons for their cooperation.

Leaving During the Performance: If you leave the theatre during a performance, you will be readmitted at the discretion of Front of House staff. If readmitted, you may be placed in an empty seat at the back of the auditorium instead of your original seat.

Being Asked to Leave: The theatre staff has, and will exercise, the right to ask any member of the audience to leave if that person is being inappropriate or disruptive including (but not limited to): talking, using devices that produce light or sound, and deliberately interfering with an actor or the performance (tripping, throwing items on or near the stage, etc.).

Talkbacks: A short question and answer period with the actors takes place after student matinees, first Tuesday evening shows, and some public matinees. While watching the show, make a mental note of questions to ask the actors about the production or life in the theatre. Our artists deserve to be treated with respect! It's okay to have a negative opinion, but this is your chance to ask questions and understand the performance or process, not to criticize. If you have a concern, see the house manager after the show and they will make sure your feedback gets to the appropriate Royal MTC staff.

Enjoy the show: Laugh, cry, gasp – responding to the performance is part of the nature of theatre! As you get involved in the story, try to balance your reactions with respecting the people around you. The curtain call is part of the performance too – it gives you a chance to thank all the artists for their hard work with applause, and for them to thank you for your attention. We all appreciate when you stay at your seat and join in the applause!

About the Playwrights

In *Murder for Two*, Officer Marcus Moscovicz sings, “I think I need a partner” and it is abundantly clear that Joe Kinosian and Kellen Blair have found a partner in each other (Kinosian and Blair 90). The two met in 2008 when they both enrolled in the BMI Lehman Engel Musical Theatre Workshop in New York. Coincidentally, they had each previously attended film school and had separate but similar realizations that film wasn’t their passion. In an interview with Tim Kashani for Showbiz U, Blair said they both had moments of “What is the universe telling me that I should be doing?” The answer to that question led them to BMI—and each other—since the program, as they describe it, “is basically speed-dating for musical theatre composers and lyricists” (Backstage). At BMI they got paired up to write a charm song for *It’s a Wonderful Life*. They failed that assignment, which Blair describes as having been “a bit of a bonding experience.” They consequently had to write a second song together and it was through that process that they discovered they had “very similar sentimentalities” (Showbiz U).

During the summer of 2009, they were on break between the first and second year of the two-year program but anticipating that they would have to pick someone to pair up with in year two. They decided they should work on something they could put on themselves (Showbiz U). In an article written by Andrew Botsford for 27east, Blair said they wanted to write “something we could do...something that would be very funny and producible” (27east). They determined the “bare minimum” was “a piano and two actors” (Showbiz U). Whether you want to call those limitations or their inspiration, from there, *Murder for Two* was born...inside a coffee shop—after all, nothing brings people together, or can enable one person to play ten suspects, quite like coffee!

Throughout the process, they recognized and relied on each other’s strengths. In the interview with Showbiz U, Kinosian explains, “I had applied [to BMI] as a composer and a lyricist ‘cause I really enjoy doing both, but Kellen’s work as lyricist is just far superior to mine, so rather than hold on to my pride I decided that working with him was the better option.” In turn, Blair praises Kinosian’s talents: “One of the other things we had to our advantage was the fact that Joe is a fantastic piano-playing singer/ actor.” Like all good partners do, they know when to delegate and when to collaborate. Kinosian defines their respective responsibilities: “The Book writing we share full responsibility together, that’s very much a 50/50 arrangement whereas the music is all me and the lyrics are all Kellen” (Showbiz U). In the interview with 27east.com, Kellen reflected on the creation of *Murder for Two* and said, “the really fun part was working on the book together.”

Through *Murder for Two*, the pair proved that two really is better than one. For its world premiere at Chicago Shakespeare Theatre in 2011, *Murder for Two* won the Joseph Jefferson Award for Best New Musical in Chicago. Since then, it has run off-Broadway, toured the United States, and been performed around the globe. Joe and Kellen went to check out the Chinese production of *Murder for Two* (and Disneyland!) in Shanghai just last year. Whether in an interview or one of their YouTube videos, they are always laughing together...and they'll make you laugh too!

When asked by Danny Groner what they hope the audience takes away home from the show with them in a 2014 interview for HuffPost, Kinoshian responded, "Because the physical world of *Murder for Two* is largely invented by the two actors, I guess there is an implied message of "hey, we can put on a show by ourselves!" It's very collaborative, with the two actors pulling together to make the show happen, while two characters pull together to solve the crime, and if there's any real-life parallel to that message, it's how my writing partner, Kellen Blair, and I have definitely found we work better together than apart."

Related Resource Links: Explore the interviews that were quoted in this piece, the video from [Showbiz U](#) and articles appearing in [Backstage](#), [27east](#), and [HuffPost](#).

You can read [Kinoshian's biography](#) and [Blair's biography](#) online and check out the [duo's website](#) and their [YouTube Channel](#).

Content Overview

Minimal strong language, some crass humour. Mature content including innuendo/references to sex, infidelity, disparaging remarks about being fat. Cartoonish violence and of course, murder.

Plot Summary

You are cordially invited to the birthday party and cold-blooded murder of great American novelist, Arthur Whitney, where the real "Surprise!" is a gunshot and all of the guests become suspects. Don't worry though, because Collarhorn Police Department has sent Marcus Moscovicz and fellow Officer, Lou, to the scene: "an isolated mansion, quite the gloomiest of places" in rural New England, a "quaint and cozy town where ev'ry person knows their neighbors." The Chief is going to promote the newbie that "proves to know the most about crime scene protocol" so Marcus Moscovicz has fifty-two minutes until the "real detective," Detective Grayson, arrives. And if there's time, he'll solve the other crime: someone stole the ice cream! In *Murder for Two*, two actors play all the parts— and a piano! Full of satire, slapstick, and songs, it's a masterful musical that puts the crime in scenes and the "laughter" in "manslaughter."

Characters

Two actors play 13 characters between them!

One actor portrays:

MARCUS MOSCOWICZ, an ambitious young officer,
and provides voices for two characters in flashback:

THE CHIEF, Marcus' grizzled boss,

VANESSA, Marcus' former partner.

The other actor portrays:

THE SUSPECTS

DAHLIA WHITNEY, the victim's loopy widow

MURRAY & BARB FLANDON, the Whitneys' bickering neighbours

STEPH WHITNEY, an overeager grad student,

BARRETTE LEWIS, a self-incriminating ballerina

DR. GRIFF, a friendly local psychiatrist,

TIMMY, YONKERS, & SKID, members of an antiquated boys' choir, and

HENRY VIVALDI, a late arrival.

The final character is Officer Lou, who isn't played by an actor. Marcus and the suspects address him as needed.

Synopsis – Contains Spoilers!

Adapted from Hope Summer Repertory Theatre.

Act 1

The musical begins with Dahlia Whitney and the other party guests hiding so that they may surprise Arthur Whitney for his birthday. But the surprise ends badly, because Arthur Whitney has been murdered! (“Overture/Waiting in the Dark”). Marcus, a police officer, enters, talking to the chief of police on the phone. He promises his chief he will stay at the scene and watch all the suspects while waiting for Detective Grayson to arrive. We are then introduced to his silent, and invisible, partner named Lou (“Protocol Says”).

Marcus rings the doorbell, and the door is opened by Dahlia Whitney, Arthur Whitney's wife. Though her husband is dead, she is just as concerned about the missing ice cream bought for the party. She introduces the party guests/suspects. Marcus then must decide: should he pretend to be the detective on the case? (“Protocol Says” reprise). Marcus lies, claiming to be the detective on the case. He then questions Dahlia (Mrs. Whitney) about her role in the night's events (“A Perfectly Lovely Surprise”). Marcus begins talking with the various suspects. From Dr. Griff, the psychiatrist, to Ms. Lewis, the ballerina, to Steph with her square black glasses, and even Murray and Barb Flandon. Murray begins accusing his wife, Barb, of murdering Arthur Whitney. He tries

to convince Marcus to arrest his wife, while his wife argues with and insults her husband (“It was Her”).

Marcus discovers that in the past, Arthur Whitney had used all of the suspects as characters in his books, and that each book holds a dirty secret about one of the suspects. Marcus then meets Timmy, Yonkers and Skid, members of the 12-person boys choir (“A Lot Worse”). We learn that Arthur Whitney kept a notebook with all the secrets he used to create his stories. But when Marcus goes to retrieve the journal, he discovers that it has been stolen!

Marcus finally gets to interview the ballerina. After a hasty phone call with his chief, he makes everyone leave to give himself and Ms. Lewis some privacy. Steph is sad that she has been forced to leave the room, because she really wants to help. She confides in Lou. Meanwhile, while waiting for Ms. Lewis, Marcus tells us the story of his recent love, a police officer-turned-killer named Vanessa (“He Needs a Partner”).

Act 2

Ms. Lewis, the ballerina, re-enters the room, and she begins to sing about her scandalous relationship with Arthur Whitney. She also gives Marcus a glimpse into her past (“So What if I Did?”). We learn that Ms. Lewis stole the notebook, an important piece of evidence! She finally returns it to Marcus, and they discover that Dr. Griff was the next subject of a story. As it turns out, he sold Arthur Whitney all his patients' secrets. But Dr. Griff won't talk unless he gets to sing a friendship song (“A Friend Like You”). Right before he reveals the killer, Dr. Griff dies, but not without one more song though! (“A Friend Like You” reprise). The characters discover that the tea given to Dr. Griff was, in fact, poisoned, so Marcus gets rid of the poisoned glass.

Marcus's phone rings again. It is the chief, telling him that the real detective is only ten minutes away. Henry Vivaldi then enters the room, claiming to have come from the bathroom. He is very sad about the death of Arthur Whitney (“Henry Vivaldi”). He leaves shaking his tambourine. Now Marcus must examine all of the clues (“Process of Elimination”). But during his sleuthing song, it finally comes out that Marcus isn't the real detective.

Detective Grayson should be there by now, but he is running late. Steph tries to solve the crime, going over all of the facts that may point to her aunt, Dahlia Whitney, being the murderer. Dahlia claims that Steph is, in fact, correct (“Steppin' Out of the Shadows”). But it's not Mrs. Whitney! It was actually someone that was outside of the house, which means... It was Lou! Lou was the only one who wasn't written about in any of Arthur Whitney's books. Timmy and the other two little boys stop Lou as he tries to run away. The suspects celebrate Marcus.

The chief calls Marcus on his phone again. Detective Grayson has been shot! Marcus is promoted to detective as the office needs someone to solve the latest murder. Mrs. Whitney asks the audience to clap for his achievement. Marcus needs a partner, so he asks Steph to help him solve detective Grayson's case ("Finale: I need a Partner/Protocol Says"). We begin to say goodbye to all of the characters, and it turns out that the choir boys stole Mrs. Whitney's ice cream. Marcus and the suspects take their bows, and sing one more song! ("Finale Ultimo: A Friend Like You").

Background Context: Whodunits

When Marcus Moscovicz confirms that Arthur Whitney has been murdered, one of the suspects asks, "Well, then...whodunit?" (22). Accordingly, *Murder for Two* is a classic—and musical—whodunit. Whodunit is a colloquial term combining "who" and "done it," and is derived from "Who [has] done it?". The term is largely attributed to Donald Gordon who used it in a review of Milward Kennedy's mystery novel *Half-Mast Murder* for *News of Books* in 1930. The subgenre of mystery and detective fiction predates its name but like with the term, there is debate about its origin. One text often credited is Edgar Allan Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," a short story published in 1841. However, cases have been made as far back as Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*.

The plot of a whodunit as we know it today revolves around solving a crime, typically a murder. The protagonist whose objective it is to do this, whether they be a professional or amateur detective, is known as the sleuth. A key feature of a whodunit is the double narrative: one narrative is the *crime itself* that has already been committed, and the other is the *investigation of the crime* in the present. The crime functions as a puzzle, with the characters and the reader (or audience) solving it simultaneously. Whodunits are often set in remote or isolated locations, as such a setting limits the characters that could be complicit and makes it more difficult for them to come and go—or as we may say with a play, enter and exit! And of course, a whodunit wouldn't be complete without red herrings. A red herring is a "false clue": something that distracts the reader from the crime or misleads them into believing it was committed by someone other than the actual culprit. This builds suspense and keeps the reader guessing. But why is it called a red herring? Red herring, an odorous cured kipper with reddish flesh, was used by dog trainers to tempt hunting dogs away from the trail they were supposed to be following—in other words, to mislead them. The term was first used in 1807 by journalist William Cobbett, although the technique itself cannot be dated.

One of the most famous whodunit novelists is Sir Arthur Conan Doyle who wrote his first Sherlock Holmes novel, *A Study in Scarlet*, in 1887 and continued to write until around 1927 which was well into what became known as the "Golden Age of Detective Fiction." It was during that time, between the First and Second World Wars, that whodunits populated bookshelves and bedside tables. It was also during the "Golden Age of

Detective Fiction” that the “Queen of Crime,” Agatha Christie, began her reign. It was none other than the *And Then There Were None* author that wrote sixty-six detective novels, fourteen short story collections, and the world’s longest running play, *The Mousetrap*. In 2018, Guinness World Records listed Christie as the best-selling fiction writer of all time; as her website puts it, “[o]utsold only by the Bible and Shakespeare.” This is a testament to the enduring intrigue of the whodunit. Whodunits capitalize on insatiable human curiosity and humankind’s relentless desire for justice. Whether it’s playing “Clue” with your family, watching *A Good Girl’s Guide to Murder* on Netflix, or reading one of Agatha Christie’s sixty-six novels in English class, *Whodunit?* continues to be a question asked over and over again to this day.

Related Resource Links: You can learn ten essential [elements of a mystery story from Masterclass](#), and [how to write a whodunit on ProWritingAid](#). The [secret formula to Agatha Christie’s mysteries is explained in this TED-Ed video](#) (5 minutes 10 seconds)

Glossary and Mentions

Alibi – As defined by Collins’ Dictionary, an alibi is “a defence by an accused person that he or she was elsewhere at the time the crime in question was committed” as well as “the evidence given to prove this.” In the song “Protocol Says,” Marcus sings, “Ev’ry alibi must be cracked” (9).

And Then There Were None – This is the title of Agatha Christie’s best-selling novel which is also the best-selling crime novel of all time. You can read more about it here: <https://www.agathachristie.com/en/stories/and-then-there-were-none>. Marcus claims, “I started reading *And Then There Were None* and immediately knew the judge did it” (16).

Au contraire – A French phrase meaning “on the contrary.” In “He Needs A Partner,” Steph says, in reference to

Lou, “No, I’m not saying he’s a bad detective. *Au contraire*. He’s nearly perfect the way he is” (48).

Boys in Blue – An informal nickname for the police. Barrette says to Marcus, “I must say I have great respect for you boys in blue” (22).

C-section – Marcus cuts off Dahlia while she is riffing and she protests that she still has “a C-section to get through” (82). A C-section is a Cesarean section which is a surgical method of delivering a baby. This misuse of terminology is part of the comedy of the show as Dahlia would actually be referring to singing in the key of C.

Charleston – When Yonkers yells, “Dance Break!” Timmy exclaims, “Charleston! Time step! Wings!” (40). The Charleston was a very popular jazz

dance in the 1920s that can be performed solo, with a partner, or in a group. [Learn to Charleston on YouTube here](#). The time step and wings are both tap dance movements.

Criminology – the study of crime and criminal behaviour, including its causes, correction, and prevention. Steph is getting her master’s degree in criminology (23). [Learn about the career of a criminologist here](#).

Doctor-Patient Confidentiality – Typically, psychiatrists must keep anything their patients say to them confidential unless the patient is going to cause serious harm to themselves or others. Marcus accused Dr. Griff of violating doctor-patient confidentiality after Dr. Griff discloses personal information about him (21).

Fuzz – Barrette says, “Why, every time I’ve had a run-in with the fuzz, I’ve been surprised by how kind they were...and how trusting” (22). Fuzz is a slang term for the police.

Hoagie – A hoagie is a bread roll sandwich loaded with deli meats, cheeses, other toppings, and dressings. It is sometimes used synonymously for a sub but is usually served cold and made with Italian ingredients. When Marcus asks Dahlia “exactly what happened tonight,” she responds with, “Let’s see. M’husband died. I had a hoagie. And then you showed up” (17).

Hussy – Dahlia refers to Barrette

Lewis as a “hussy” since Barrette admitted to having a relationship with the victim (56). This is an offensive term for a female who is thought to have had a lot of casual sexual partners.

Ikea – Founded in Sweden in 1943, Ikea is now one of the most well-known home furnishing brands worldwide. In “A Lot Woise,” Timmy sings, “We spent a night trapped in Ikea once” (40).

Mamma Mia – Mamma Mia is a musical about a daughter’s mission to learn who her father is on the eve of her wedding as told through ABBA’s greatest hits. In “A Lot Woise,” Timmy sings, “We saw a show called *Mamma Mia* once” (40).

Maycomb – Dahlia says, “M’story begins when I was a young, knockneed scrap of a thing runnin’ around Maycomb and throwing stones at the old Radley Place (18). Maycomb is the fictional setting of the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, and the Radley Place is the home of Arthur “Boo” Radley in that book.

Off the clock – In the finale, Steph sings, “A duo/ And off/ the clock/ who knows” (90).

Ou est la gare? – Dahlia says, “Step back, Moscowicz, I got this. I once took a course in hostage situations. Lou. *Ou est la gare*. Oh, wait, that was a French class” (85). It translates from French to English as “Where is the station?”

Pager– A pager, also known as a beeper, is a small wireless telecommunications device that displays messages. Pagers peaked in popularity in the late 1980s through late 1990s, although they are still used as the backup method of communication for those who must be reachable. After Barb sings, “So take out all your phones and turn them off now,” Dahlia sings, “If you have a pager, there’s a garbage by the door” (5).

Prima Ballerina – translates from Italian to “first ballerina” and is used to distinguish the principal or lead female ballerina in a ballet company. Marcus identifies Barette Lewis as “the famous prima ballerina” (10).

Psychiatrist – Dr. Griff is the local psychiatrist (10). A psychiatrist is a physician (medical doctor) who specializes in mental health, including the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mental, emotional, and behavioural disorders.

Ronde de jambe – Barrette says, “And this is a *ronde de jambe*” and then does one (51). It is a classical ballet term that

means “round of the leg” or “circle of the leg” and it is when one leg moves away from the body in a straight line prior to carrying out a semi-circular motion.

[Learn to do a ronde de jambe on YouTube here.](#)

Skosh – As explained in the Meriam-Webster Dictionary, skosh comes from the Japanese word *sukoshi* which means “a tiny bit” or “a small amount.” “Me, resentful? Just ‘cause he shoved me in the shadows the second we tied the knot? Maybe a skosh” (19).

Strip Search – Marcus says, “I can only assume the notebook was stolen, but short of doing a strip search, there’s nothing I can do but continue the interrogation” at which Dahlia begins voluntarily undressing (43) A strip search is “a search for something concealed on a person made after removal of the person’s clothing,” as per Merriam-Webster dictionary.

Whacked – This is slang for getting killed or murdered. Timmy says, “Yes, it ‘soiently’ [certainly] would be tragical if someone else was to get whacked” (41).

Discussion and Writing Prompts – for schools and public patrons!

1. What surprised you about the play?
2. Did any part of the play make you feel uncomfortable?
3. Do you think this play would be easy to produce? Why or why not?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of a two-person show?
5. Why do you think the creators chose to have this be a two-person show rather than have other actors playing the other roles?

6. What techniques did the actors use to distinguish themselves from the other characters they portray throughout the play?
7. Are there any characters in particular you found yourself relating to or empathizing with?
8. Describe the characterization of one of the characters.
9. The author's note on ad libbing reads, "The play should have the feel of being improvised on the spot without any actual ad libbing taking place" (3). Why would they want the show to have the feel of being improvised?
10. How did the music contribute to the storytelling?
11. What was your favourite song in the show and why?
12. What methods did the creators use to add comedy to the show?
13. What do you think is the intended message of the show? What did you take away from the show?
14. Why do you think they called the show "Murder for Two"?
15. Explain the use of props in the show.
16. Explore the symbolism/ significance of any of the following items: Marcus' cell phone, Marcus' badge, Murder weapon (gun), Arthur Whitney's Books, Coffee, Tea, Vanessa's briefcase, Arthur's notebook, Emergency lever, Remote
17. What aspects of this show have you seen in other whodunits?
18. Do you have a favourite mystery story (book, TV show, movie)?
19. There are three murders in the play, Arthur Whitney, Dr. Griff, and Detective Grayson. What is the function of each one?
20. Who did you initially think was guilty and why?
21. What red herrings were in the show?
22. Choose one of the allusions in the play and explore its significance.
23. Why do you think the creators chose this setting for the show?
24. The script says that previous versions included "a small, spooky-looking mansion (it could be a dollhouse/ model, a shadow, or whatever works best in the space" (4). Why might a production choose to indicate the setting in this way rather than a full set?
25. Why do you think Lou is unseen?
26. How do you think Dahlia feels about her husband, Arthur Whitney?
27. What do you think is the function of Henry Vivaldi?
28. What do you think the show is saying about following protocol?
29. What protocols have you had to follow/ do you follow in your life?
30. Have you ever investigated anything? Were you able to figure it out? If so, how?

Suggested Classroom Activities

These activities are specifically designed for this show. On our website are [additional general activities suitable for any MTC production](#).

Agatha Christie's Secret Formula: Watch TED-Ed's "The secret formula to Agatha Christie's murder mysteries": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98pNh3LtV8c> and have students list the ingredients to Agatha Christie's secret formula. If you have students read an Agatha Christie story, ask them to identify these ingredients in that text.

How to Make Your Writing Suspenseful: Watch TED-Ed's "How to make your writing suspenseful": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjKruwAfZWk>. Ask students to record the techniques mentioned and then apply them to their own short story. You could also ask them to annotate their own work to identify and explain how they applied the technique.

What is the Crime Genre: Have students watch "What is the Crime Genre" to learn nine key characteristics of the crime genre: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJBLSYQNoWo>. This can be shown prior to or after seeing the play to introduce the genre, or to remind them of what elements they need to include in their own writing or dramatization.

How to Plan a Detective Story: Have students watch "How to plan a detective story": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lAnluUPRdko> as inspiration for writing their own detective story or scene.

Improvisation Warm-Ups

Greetings: Have students start the lesson by greeting each other in different ways, like in this scene in the play (14-15):

MURRAY: Evening

BARB: Hi!

DR. GRIFF: Howdy!

STEPH: Hey...

BARRETTE: Hello

Ad-Libbing: The author's note on ad-libbing reads, "The play should have the feel of being improvised on the spot without any actual ad-libbing taking place" (3). One of the exceptions listed is "if at any time during a performance an audience member's cell phone rings or a person is caught texting/ emailing, don't let it pass by unnoticed" (3). Provide some students with a scene and instruct other students to (or pretend to) use their cell phone at various times and have the students in scene react to the students on their phone and the students on their phones respond accordingly.

Pocket Phone: Marcus accidentally pocket-dials the chief so he can hear him talking about the crime scene protocol. Ask students to improvise a scene where they are not-so-accidentally pocket-dialling someone they want to overhear something.

Proto-call Up on Stage

Have students write or improvise scenes in which they must follow the police protocol as described in the show:

- 1) First question each of the suspects and evaluate possible motives
- 2) Discover to whom the motive most applies
- 3) Re-enact the exact moment of the crime

A Perfectly Lovely Playlist

Provide students with this list of the song titles from the show and ask them to incorporate one (or more) of the titles as a line in either an improvised scene, monologue, or a short story:

Waiting in the Dark

Protocol Says

A Perfectly Lovely Surprise

It Was Her

A Lot Woise

He Needs a Partner

So What if I Did?

A Friend Like You

Henry Vivaldi

Process of Elimination

Steppin' Out of the Shadows

I Need a Partner

Arthur Whitney's Ghostwriter

Provide students with this list of Arthur Whitney's book titles and ask them to choose one and write the story as if they were Whitney himself:

Scattered Around the Body

All of Them Bananas

The Feisty Old Couple

Unsolved Hearts

Jarcus Joscowicz

The Friendly Old Psychiatrist is Innocent

My Niece is a Dumb Grad Student Who Asks Too Many Questions

Interview Assignment: Arthur Whitney's stories were based on the people in his life—specifically, the party guests! At the party, Marcus Joscowicz interviews all the guests—

turned-suspects to determine who had motive to kill Arthur. Ask students to interview and write a story about someone in their life.

Party for Two: Have students create an invitation for Arthur Whitney’s birthday party.

Compare and Haunt-rast: Choose (or have students choose) an age and stage appropriate whodunnit and have students compare and contrast it with *Murder for Two*. Ask them to consider what characteristics of a whodunnit are in both texts. They could communicate this through a think-pair-share, class discussion, or written assignment.

Musical Influences: In an [interview with Broadway World](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p0Gwe5gKgjo), Joe Kisonian said *Murder for Two* “was based on our love of old slapstick movies, primarily the Marx Brothers, and classic murder mysteries of the Agatha Christie mold.” Have students read an Agatha Christie murder mystery and/or watch footage of the Marx Brothers (such as this clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p0Gwe5gKgjo>) and describe how they see these influences reflected in *Murder for Two*.

Musical Comedy: Ask students to identify what makes each of the following lines funny. Afterwards, get them to reflect on how they could apply that in their own writing or performance.

1. MARCUS: “Oh my god, Chief, have I been leaving you a voicemail this whole time? How embarrassing. Have a great day! (winks at Lou and hangs up) (11)
2. MARCUS: “But that was long ago/ SO very long ago/ Six months last week, to be exact” (11)
3. DAHLIA: “Is that the one where the novelist husband gets shot in the head? It’s amazing how the most random things can remind you of your personal troubles.” (13)
4. MARCUS: “Uh, yes...I’m not the detective...(beat) That usually works this district. But since Detective Grayson is out of town...” (16)
5. MARCUS: “I let someone help me once before, and let’s just say it didn’t...help” (24)
6. MARCUS: “How dare you, Lou. I don’t care if she is the kind of woman that could really help a guy learn to love again. I think we both know what protocol says about mixing your personal and professional lives. That’s right, never. Again.” (10)
7. BARRETTE: “So what if my sentences end in...suspense!” (54)
8. MARCUS: Ladies and gentlemen, we have a second victim.
DAHLIA: “Third! We’ve already seen the slow, painful death of the American theatre.” (64)
9. MARCUS: It’s okay, Dr. Griff. Can you speak?
DR. GRIFF shakes his head

MARCUS: Not at all?

Dr. GRIFF shakes his head.

MARCUS: Not even a little syllable or two? To tell me who the killer is?

DR. GRIFF: No, but could I have some music while I die? (64)

10. Barrette: AND WHAT OF MY CRIMINAL RECORD? SO WHAT IF I'VE KILLED A FEW MEN? I ONCE WAS DERANGED (GIVES A DERANGED LOOK) BUT AS YOU SEE, I'VE CHANGED. SO WHY WOULD I TRY IT AGAIN?

MARCUS: Killed a few men?

BARRETTE: It was self-defence...and that entire jury of young, persuadable men agreed (53)

11. YONKERS: WE SEEN A CHUMP WHO HELD HIS BREATH FOR LONGER THAN AN HOUR ONCE. SAW MY GRANNY IN THE SHOWER ONCE. YEAH, WE SEEN A LOT WISE. (39)

Investigative Journalism: Have students conduct research on police protocol for your region and identify whether it was adhered to by the characters in the show. They could present their findings to a partner or the class, or in an argumentative paragraph.

Curriculum Connections

Dramatic Arts:

DR–C1 The learner develops understandings about people and practices in the dramatic arts.

DR–C2 The learner develops understandings about the influence and impact of the dramatic arts.

DR–C3 The learner understands about the roles, purposes, and meanings of the dramatic arts.

DR–R1 The learner generates initial reactions to drama/ theatre experiences.

DR–R2 The learner critically observes and describes drama/theatre experiences.

DR–R3 The learner analyzes and interprets drama/ theatre experiences.

DR–R4 The learner applies new understandings about drama/theatre to construct identity and to act in transformative ways.

DR–CR2 The learner experiments with, develops, and uses ideas for creating drama/ theatre.

Music:

M–C1 The learner develops understandings about people and practices in music.

M–C2 The learner develops understandings about the influence and impact of music.

M–C3 The learner develops understandings about the roles, purposes, and meanings of music.

M–R1 The learner generates initial reactions to music experiences.

M–R2 The learner critically listens to, observes, and describes music experiences.

M–R3 The learner analyzes and interprets music experiences.

English Language Arts:

As the English Curriculum in Manitoba is in flux, these are SLO numbers from the previous published versions.

Express Ideas (1.1.1) Question and reflect on personal responses, predictions, and interpretations; apply personal viewpoints to diverse situations or circumstances.

Consider Others' Ideas (1.1.2) Acknowledge the value of others' ideas and opinions in exploring and extending personal interpretations and viewpoints.

Explain Opinions (1.2.2) Review and refine personal viewpoints through reflection, feedback, and self-assessment.

Prior Knowledge (2.1.1) Analyze and explain connections between previous experiences, prior knowledge, and a variety of texts [including books].

Experience Various Texts (2.2.1) Experience texts from a variety of forms and genres and cultural traditions; explain various interpretations of the same text.

Connects Self, Texts, and Culture (2.2.2) - Examine how personal experiences, community traditions, and Canadian perspectives are presented in oral, literary, and media texts.

Forms and Genres (2.3.1) Explain preferences for particular forms and genres of oral, literary, and media texts.

Appreciate the Artistry of Texts (2.2.3) Discuss how word choice and supporting details in oral, literary, and media texts [including books, drama, and oral presentations] affect purpose and audience.

Participate in Group Inquiry (3.1.3) Generate and access ideas in a group and use a variety of methods to focus and clarify inquiry or research topic

Organize Information (3.3.1) Organize information and ideas by developing and selecting appropriate categories and organizational structures.

Organize Ideas (4.1.3) Identify and use a variety of organizational patterns in own oral, written, and visual texts; use effective transitions.

Revise Content (4.2.2) Review previous draft and revise to refine communication and enhance self-expression.

Grammar and Usage (4.3.1) Edit for parallel structure, use of transitional devices, and clarity.

Spelling (4.3.2) Know and apply a repertoire of spelling conventions when editing and proofreading; use a variety of resources when editing and proofreading.

Capitalization and Punctuation (4.3.3) Know and apply capitalization and punctuation conventions in dialogues, quotations, footnotes, endnotes, and references when editing and proofreading.

Attentive Listening and Viewing (4.4.3) Demonstrate critical listening and viewing skills and strategies and show respect for presenter(s).

Compare Responses (5.2.1) Recognize that differing perspectives and unique reactions enrich understanding.

Relate Texts to Culture (5.2.2) Explain ways in which oral, literary, and media texts reflect topics and themes in life.

Appreciate Diversity (5.2.3) Reflect on ways in which the choices and motives of individuals encountered in oral, literary, and media texts provide insight into those of self and others; discuss personal participation and responsibilities in a variety of communities.

Enrichment Guide Contributor Biography

Sarah Farrant is thrilled to be maintaining a long-distance relationship as a study guide creator with the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre from Hamilton, Ontario. She is very passionate about the incorporation of arts in education, as she graduated from Western University with an Honours Specialization in English and Drama, as well as a Bachelor of Education. Sarah has been involved with a number of theatrical productions, both on and off stage. She has experience working with youth in a variety of capacities, including at a childcare centre, tutoring service, and day camp, as well as in elementary and secondary schools locally and overseas. This summer, Sarah saw *Cymbeline* and *La Cage aux Folles* at the Stratford Festival and highly recommends you see a show there if you're ever in Ontario!

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