

Review: *Communicating Doors* (East Side Players)

By [Mike Anderson](#)

A highly-polished, detail-oriented *Communicating Doors* at Toronto's Papermill Theatre



There's a certain type of British farce: doors open and slam, an old man chases after a young woman, and everyone ends up dressed in someone else's clothing. In writing [Communicating Doors](#), Alan Ayckbourn was poking fun at these conventions—and giving them a faintly sinister twist. [Doors](#) isn't some innocent sex farce: here we find a violent henchman lurking in the closet, a genuinely evil man calling the shots, and the lives of our three female protagonists in the balance.

This production, at the [Papermill Theatre](#) (Todmorden Mills), picks up on Ayckbourn's playfulness and runs with it. This is a hefty production, defined by a clear understanding of the author's intentions, and tremendously fun to watch.

The action is set in an ordinary hotel room, with an important twist. Poopay, a dominatrix living 20 years in the future, is summoned to witness an important document: a man's confession to murder. Spooked, she flees to the closet and finds herself transported through time to the same hotel room, 20 years earlier, where she encounters his soon-to-die second wife, Ruella. The two race forward and backward through time, trying desperately to save their own skins, protect his first wife, escape from the eager hands of a murderous henchman, and patch up whatever holes they leave in the fabric of time.

The bad news is that this convoluted plot means most of the first act is spent on exposition: the action doesn't really kick off until the intermission. Of course, this is Ayckbourn's fault, not the company's—and he does make up for it with a brilliant second-act opener. The latter section takes off with a bang and keeps going, complete with a high-drama action sequence straight out of [Harold Lloyd](#).

The cast is solid, and one of the best I've seen in community theatre. Tammie Van Dyk stands out as Poopay, sharing the heavy lifting with Lydia Kiselyk as Ruella. This cast ingratiated themselves to me in an important way: my idea of hell is sitting in the audience of a community theatre while a room full of people try desperately to execute British accents. Some of the cast make the attempt—and they succeed. The rest “speak Canadian”, and the effect is far more pleasing than the usual three hours of Dick Van Dyke.

Bill Corcoran's set is fantastic, no small task given this show's technical requirements: I'm surprised he could find a couch suitable for an important moment in the second act. And director Marina Leyderman does her best to keep the pace sharp, hobbled as she is by the need to completely clear the stage between spells in the closet.

This is a highly-polished, detail-oriented production which makes the most of a complex plot. Some of it works, some of it doesn't, but it all hangs together well, and the second act in particular is often downright exciting. A fun little show, if you can bear the long walk down Pottery Road.

Details

- [Communicating Doors](#) is playing at the Papermill Theatre (67 Pottery Rd. near Pottery & Broadview) through March 9th, 2013.
- Remaining performances are nightly at 8 PM.
- Tickets are \$22, \$15 for students.
- Buy tickets [online](#), in-person at the box office before performances, or by telephone at (416) 425-0917.

Photograph of Lydia Kiselyk (Ruelle) and Tammy Van Dyk (Poopay) by John McQueen and Cindy Alexander.