

# Lakeside Players, Inc.

PROUDLY PRESENTS THE PREMIERE PRODUCTION OF



a comic mystery by Michael Craft  
directed by the author

September 19 through October 4, 2003  
Rhode Opera House, Kenosha, Wisconsin

## Cast of Characters

Claire Gray, a renowned theater director .....Alice Anne Conner  
Grant Knoll, a Palm Springs real-estate broker .....Gary M. Stamm  
Tanner Griffin, a promising young actor ..... Dan Dane  
Erin Donnelly, a caterer's maid .....Jessica Goforth  
Detective Larry Knoll, Grant's brother .....Rich Krapf  
A Sheriff's Deputy ..... Troy Hurtig  
Kiki Jasper-Plunkett, a costume designer ..... Patti Fitchett  
Rebecca Wallace, wife of a major film producer ....Maureen Winkler  
Bryce Ballantyne, Rebecca's attorney ..... Troy Hurtig

## Setting

The action takes place in the living room of Claire Gray's vintage-modern home in Rancho Mirage, California, near Palm Springs.

### ACT ONE

Scene 1: The present. Late Saturday, nearly midnight, a warm April night in the desert.  
Scene 2: Later, after midnight.  
Scene 3: Sunday morning.

### ACT TWO

Scene 1: Monday afternoon.  
Scene 2: That evening, sometime after six.

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*There will be one ten-minute intermission between the two acts.*

## Meet the cast

**Alice Anne Conner** (Claire) first stepped onto a stage almost 42 years ago in Cornelia Otis Skinner's *Our Hearts Were Young and Gay*. She has been involved in theater in one form or another ever since. A regular at the Racine Theatre Guild, Over Our Head Players, and Cabbage City Theatre, Alice Anne is making her first appearance with Lakeside Players. A reporter for the *Kenosha News*, she has been a professional writer since she was 16. She is married to Marty Katch. Between the two of them, they have seven children and six grandchildren. Her favorite playwrights are Tennessee Williams and Michael Craft.



**Dan Dane** (Tanner) marks his third Lakeside production with *Photo Flash*, having also appeared last season as Aide Warren in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and as



Brick Pollitt in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. When not working onstage, Dan is a recruiter for Manpower Professional in Gurnee and an active participant in MUSA kickball. What's more, Dan is

pursuing a career in law enforcement, a goal he hopes to realize before year's end. He thanks Michael and the wonderful cast and staff for the opportunity to appear in this premiere, and he thanks his family and many friends for their support and

words of encouragement.

**Patti Fitchett** (Kiki), the former Patti Potter, returns to Lakeside Players after a 24-year absence. While with LSP in the '70s, her favorite roles were in *Lovers and Other Strangers* and the musical *The Apple Tree*. Patti received her bachelor's degree in theater arts from U.W. Stevens Point. She now works regularly with the Over Our Head Players in Racine. Her favorite roles there include *The Ice-Fishing Play*, *Italian American Reconciliation*, and *The Eight: Reindeer Monologues*. Patti's "day job" is as family-services coordinator for Proko Funeral Home in Kenosha. She and her drummer-hubby, Ryland, have two sons, Ian and Julian.



**Jessica Goforth** (Erin) recently graduated from Carthage College with a B.A. in theater. She has appeared in productions of *Our Country's Good* and *Dickens' Village* with the Performance Artist Network; at Carthage, she was seen in *Medea*, *Bye Bye Birdie*, *Twelfth Night*, *Macbeth*, *1776*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*. She also spent four years in various roles in



Christ Community Church's *Passion Play* in Zion, Illinois. *Photo Flash* marks her first appearance with Lakeside Players. She thanks her parents and the rest of her family for their support

and love, her friends, the cast and crew, Michael Craft, and last (but not least) her boyfriend, Dennis.

**Troy Hurtig** (Bryce and the deputy) is making his acting debut with *Photo Flash*. Originally from Minnesota, he attended the University of Wisconsin–Parkside, where he played soccer and graduated with a degree in communication. A certified Web designer, he now serves in that position at G. Leblanc Corporation. Troy is grateful for the opportunity to work with such a talented cast and crew, and he thanks Michael Craft for this opportunity to appear onstage.



**Rich Krapf** (Larry) was first bitten by the acting bug at Waukegan High School, where he performed in *Barefoot in the Park*. The next year, he appeared with the Roundtree Players in *Of Mice and Men*. The bug bit again 25 years later, in



2001, when he joined the cast of *How to Succeed in Business at PM&L Theatre* in Antioch. Rich has subsequently appeared in six more productions, treading the boards at PM&L, the Waukegan Community Players, and Village Theater Productions in Libertyville. *Photo Flash* marks his first appearance with Lakeside Players, and he thanks his family (especially Jan) and friends for all their support through his theatrical endeavors.

**Gary M. Stamm** (Grant) is a veteran of the Lakeside Players'

stage, where his favorite roles have included Michael in *I Do, I Do* and Milo in *Sleuth*. Administratively, he has served Lakeside as president for five years, including the past three. He is also active on the stage in Racine (Fagin in *Oliver* and FDR in *Annie*, among others) and has appeared as Professor Harold Hill in *The Music Man* in Antioch, Illinois. Professionally, he serves as executive director of the Main Stay Therapeutic Riding Program, Inc., in Richmond, Illinois. He owes much to his wife, Ruth, and his daughters—April, living in New York City, and Liesl, who lives in Pleasant Prairie.



**Maureen Winkler** (Rebecca) had the pleasure of working with Michael Craft at LSP when he costarred with the incredibly funny John Ackermann in *It Runs in the Family*. (She played the old codger in the wheelchair between them.) While Maureen usually plays comedic roles (Chris in *Rumors*, Mildred in *An Evening of Culture*, and most recently, Grace in *Bus Stop*), she has discovered what friends and family already knew—she didn't have to dig too deep to find the ice queen character of Rebecca Wallace. Maureen thanks Dan and Dana for their continued support, the Navy Pier ladies for their shopping expertise, and the late, great Dave Arneson for starting her down this magical road.



If you  
liked  
the  
play



you'll  
love the  
novel



### ***Photo Flash,***

Michael Craft's first stage play,  
is the basis for his third  
Claire Gray mystery novel,

### ***Desert Spring***

coming in February from  
St. Martin's Press, New York.

For complete details—plus ordering information and excerpts from all of Craft's ten novels—visit the author's Web site:

**[www.michaelcraft.com](http://www.michaelcraft.com)**

**Michael Craft** (director and playwright) is the author of nine published novels, most of them murder mysteries that have gained an enthusiastic, national following. *Publishers Weekly* called his heroine Claire Gray “intuitive and imaginative . . . a refreshing and complex sleuth.” Another critic called Craft himself “a talented, gifted storyteller who is clearly a grand master of the amateur-sleuth tale.” Mike is highly honored that Lakeside Players has invited him to direct his first stage play, *Photo Flash*, as the opening production of the troupe's 30th season. He has served Lakeside as a former board member and past president; he has also played leading roles in three LSP productions, most notably that of Antonio Salieri in Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus* (1994). Better known locally as Michael Craft Johnson, he toils by day as vice president for communications at G. Leblanc Corporation. He thanks the entire cast and crew for their dedicated efforts to bring this new play to life on the Lakeside stage.

**Linda M. Gray** (assistant director) has been active with Lakeside Players since 1996, when she volunteered as a stage manager, and hasn't stopped since. She has done everything from cleaning to serving on the board of directors—and in her “spare time,” she works at Kenosha Hospital. Linda wants to thank Michael Craft for the opportunity to assistant direct this premiere production of *Photo Flash*, as well as the cast and crew for all of their hard work. She sends special thanks to her family and her husband, Rob, for their support and understanding.

## ***Production Staff for “Photo Flash”***

Director .....	Michael Craft
Assistant Director .....	Linda M. Gray
Stage Manager .....	Kimberly Krebs
Technical Director .....	Marv Vincent
Lighting and Sound Operators .....	Marv Vincent, Kenny Krebs
Set Design .....	Michael Craft, Ed Skinner
Set Construction .....	Ed Skinner
Construction Assistance .....	Gabriela Arcan, Linda Gray, Troy Hurtig, Steve Mattner, Leon Pascucci, Marv Vincent
Set Decoration .....	Leon Pascucci
Set Dressing and Props .....	Michael, Linda, Leon
Costumes .....	Michael, the Cast, and Crew
Makeup .....	The Cast and Crew
Crew and Dressers .....	Kimberly Krebs, Kathy Maki
Incidental Music .....	Michael Gudbaur, Sam Chell
Painting over Bookcase .....	Max Miller (New York)
Lobby Staff Coordinator .....	Jeff Gray
Program Cover Design .....	Mitch Rossow
Program Contents .....	Michael Craft
Publicity .....	Terry Lawler

### ***Special Thanks***

The author offers special thanks to Dean Yohnk, of the University of Wisconsin–Parkside theater department, and Eric Margerum, previously of the Carthage College theater department, for their generous assistance in reviewing early drafts of the *Photo Flash* script. The final text would have been greatly lacking without their enthusiasm for the project and their discerning input.

### ***Acknowledgments***

Mike Worcester and Insty-Prints,  
for assistance with producing the mountain backdrop.

Scott Yance, Studio 75, and Elaine’s Wig Studio,  
for serving the show’s special hairstyling needs.

Steve Mattner and Triangle Appliance, Video & Carpeting.  
Sheriff David Beth and the Kenosha County Sheriff’s Department.

***The company*** extends its thanks to the many volunteers who staff the lobby, clean, and provide support for all productions. If you would be interested in serving as a house manager or in any other capacity, please phone Lakeside Players at 657-PLAY.

## ***Thoughts from the author on his first play***

Readers who are familiar with my novels are already aware that theater is a deeply held interest of mine. The theatrical world provides a general backdrop for all of my Claire Gray novels, as well as the fifth Mark Manning mystery, *Boy Toy*. It will come as no surprise that this focus on theater stems from my own involvement with “the art of Thespis.”

I discovered the magic of theater during my sophomore year of high school, and it has been a force in my life ever since. I was active in theater not only in high school at Elgin Academy (Elgin, Illinois), but also in college, at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign). Later, I came to know the delights of community theater here in Kenosha with Lakeside Players.

Over the years, I’ve appeared in 17 productions, playing roles that have ranged from Shakespeare to farce. In 1996, I had the opportunity to explore another facet of theater when I directed a production of A.R. Gurney’s *Later Life*. On the “management” side, I served as president of Lakeside Players from 1994 through 1996 and in various board positions for several years before and after.

This period of intensive in-

volvement came to an end in 1997, when my first Mark Manning novel, *Flight Dreams*, was published by Kensington Books. Securing that initial three-book contract was the realization of a

long-held dream, but it left little time for other creative pursuits, so my days of active participation in theater drew to a close. Still, the longing was there, and as my self-confidence as a writer grew, I came to realize that it was time for me to explore yet another facet of theater.

I wanted to try my hand as a playwright.

I hit upon the specific idea of writing a Claire Gray murder mystery (for the stage) while researching several aspects of my second Claire Gray novel, *Desert Winter*. In that book, Claire is mounting a production of the suspense classic *Laura* and decides to borrow a plot device from the film that had been based on the play (this concerns the detail of hiding the murder weapon in an antique clock). In order to make sure I had my facts straight, I read the original *Laura* novel, then the play script, and then watched a tape of the movie. I was fascinated by the way Vera Caspary had adapted the same story to three different media. Each telling was unique; no two



versions were identical. But the basic plot and its arc of suspense and resolution remained very much intact.

Thus inspired, I decided that my next novel would share its plot with a stage play. Rather than write the novel first, then condense and “dramatize” it, I decided to tackle the play first, then expand and “novelize” it.

The result is *Photo Flash*, and the play is the basis for *Desert Spring*, my third Claire Gray mystery novel, to be published by St. Martin’s Press in early 2004.

The play has to stand on its own, of course. Audiences need not be familiar with any of the books in order to understand and enjoy the play. Because a play is so much more restrictive than a novel in terms of its time frame, setting, and number of characters, I needed to “recycle” a few suspects from earlier Claire Gray novels (notably Grant and Tanner), and not all of the standing characters from the novels (notably D. Glenn Yeats) can appear in the play. In the novelization, *Desert Spring*, things are back on track; Glenn is in the story, and new characters replace Grant and Tanner as serious suspects.

Finally, a note on the play’s tone. As murder mysteries go, *Photo Flash* contains plenty of humor, with Grant and Kiki leading the

laughs. Audiences should thoroughly enjoy themselves while weighing the headier issues of homicide and detection. In fact, after reviewing an early draft of the script, a university theater professor suggested that I label the play not merely “a mystery,” but “a comic mystery.”

At times rollicking and at other times profoundly serious, the

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**“Somehow, we’re left with the lingering impression that Claire’s sleuthing days have only begun.”**

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show mixes irreverent laughter with Claire’s dawning insights into classic middle-age riddles of lost youth. These emotional extremes serve to frame the ongoing mystery,

which Claire finally solves in a moment of victory—vowing to restrict her future triumphs to “the theatrical variety.”

Somehow, we’re left with the lingering impression that Claire’s sleuthing days have only begun.

Ultimately, *Photo Flash* is as much a character study of Claire Gray as it is a perky whodunit. Claire is a complex gal, struggling with some fairly heavy issues at the personal, emotional level, as delineated in the play’s romantic subplot. This, I hope, is what may set *Photo Flash* apart from so many other worthy drawing-room dramas.

These deeper issues, which are decidedly *not* comic, are meant to keep audiences thinking—long after the laughter ends, long after the curtain falls.

— **Michael Craft**