



## ELTC's *The Guardsman*—sure to delight

By JOE HART

Hurry up! Time is running out.

You only have a few more opportunities to see one of the funniest performances in Cape May this year.

The East Lynne Theater Company's production of Franz Molnar's comedy *The Guardsman* is a witty treat that's only running until Aug. 30.

Set in Vienna before World War I, *The Guardsman* tells the story of a pair of stage actors who have been married for only six months. The husband has become worried that his wife, notorious for changing men every 26 weeks, tires of their marriage and will soon leave him.

The actor concocts a hair-brained scheme to test the actress' loyalty.

He pretends to go away for an acting gig and disguises himself as a Russian military prince who tries to woo the actress away from her husband.

Appropriately, East Lynne's Mark Edward Lang and Alison Murphy, a pair of married actors, portray the lead roles. Similarly, the 1924 production of the play helped to launch the Broadway careers of famed married stage couple Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne.

In East Lynne's production, directed by Karen Case Cook, Lang gets the most laughs playing both the insecure, jealous husband who goes off on over-acting rages at his wife, and the costumed Guardsman with a ridiculously funny eastern European accent.

The alluring Murphy, on the other hand, perfectly plays the sullen-at-times, flirty-at-times actress who may or may not know about her husband's deception as the guardsman.

Another scene-stealer was Edward Furs, who played the couple's good friend and theater critic. The critic, who may or may not have a thing for the actress, acts as

a confidante to both, but appears to be playing both sides against the middle.

One of the funnier scenes comes when the actor and the critic argue over how many former lovers the actress had accumulated, the critic said there were nine, but the actor insisted it was only seven.

Gayle Stahlhuth, East Lynne's artistic director, plays the actress' mama/housekeeper. She also gets some funny lines as a character who doesn't approve of the couple's marriage because it hinders her social life.

The cast is rounded out by Thomas Ranziszewski, who plays a bill collector and an usher. As the bill collector, he inflates the actor's ego by refusing tickets to the theater unless the actor is performing. He also recognizes the actor behind his guardsman disguise.

Technical Director Lee O'Connor, who by the way is married to Stahlhuth, managed the stage which, through the rearrangement of a few pieces of furniture and some draperies, and the use of different lighting, was transformed from the couple's apartment to a box at the opera and back again between acts.

As a whole, the play was not only incredibly funny, but also well performed and produced.

So, get out to East Lynne's production of *The Guardsman* playing at the First Presbyterian Church at 500 Hughes Street, Wednesdays through Saturdays, through Aug. 30 at 8:30 p.m.

You won't regret it.

Tickets are \$25 general admission; \$20 for seniors and those with disabilities and their support companions; and \$10 for full-time students. Children ages 12 and under are always free.

For information and reservations, call 609-884-5898 or visit [www.eastlynnetheater.org](http://www.eastlynnetheater.org).