

The Man Who Came To Dinner

Famous author and radio personality Sheridan Whiteside turns out to be a terrible houseguest. After slipping on ice as he was leaving the home of Richard and Hazel Stanley, this fat, bearded man is confined to a wheelchair until his back mends. Whiteside, portrayed with broad strokes by Tim Walsh, commandeers the den, living room and family phone for himself, and turns life in the house upside down with his bombastic ways, the odd gifts that arrive (including penguins, a cockroach colony and a mummy case) and the even odder visitors.

Richard Stanley, played with wild bluster by Eric Smith, suffers the most for the indignation of losing his place as head of household. Hazel Stanley, played by Allison Dunn, is at turns excited to have such a famous houseguest and outraged at the inconveniences imposed. The Stanley children are played by Natalie Tucker and Connor Briggs. They are encouraged by Whiteside to take adult steps away from the nest, only to be dragged back home by an angry father and distraught mother.

Whiteside is ably assisted by his tart talking secretary, Maggie Cutler, played with sass and charm by Haley Matuszynski. She keeps up with Whiteside's demands, insults and scheming, holding her own against the tide. When against all odds, hard bitten Maggie is struck down by love, it is local newspaper man and "wannabe playwright" Burt Jefferson, played by Bo Durham, that fires Cupid's arrow.

Bo plays Jefferson straight for the most part, but does a lovely loopy turn as a slightly drunk, very tired, very happy guy who just spent the night with a beautiful actress who is "helping" him rewrite a play he wrote. Maggie is jealous of the actress, the one and only Loraine Sheldon played by Ashley Racz, and furious at Whiteside for bringing the vixen to town to turn Jefferson's head, break up the infatuation and keep Maggie as his secretary.

Bald Doc Brown provides running comic relief. Played by Ian Cole, he is not only Whiteside's local doctor, but hopeful author of "Forty Years an Ohio Doctor". He tries to get Whiteside to help him edit the hefty tome, but Whiteside puts him off every time. Eventually the doctor just comes in and excuses himself back out of the room, much to the delight of the audience.

Nurse Preen is there to care for Whiteside. Played by Lily Mockensturm, she is frightened of her charge and exasperated to the point of quitting her profession. Being bitten by an escaped penguin is the last straw.

Kristin Endriss is Sarah, the cook and maid. Whiteside takes a liking to her because she is a great cook, which this fat man cannot resist. When Whiteside

tries to hire her away from the Stanley's, she is torn between loyalty and the chance to go to New York. Kristin brings a sweet innocence and confusion to the role.

Mr. Stanley's sister Harriet is another comic relief role. As portrayed by Erica Renzhofer, she is flighty, giddy and a little strange. She has a repeated bit of carrying her shoes up and down the stairs, only to put them on in the living room and take them back off to exit. The audience roared each time she repeated this bit. Her secret past as a multiple murderer provides Whiteside the leverage he needs against Mr. Stanley to lighten up on the children and let them grow up.

There is an endless stream of colorful visitors to the Stanley household including Professor Metz, broadly played by Brittany Jones, who brings Whiteside a colony of 10,000 cockroaches to observe. Next a trio of murderers from the nearby prison stops over to enjoy a fine lunch. Katrina Bacome, Jane Liu and Erica Renzhofer play hard bitten criminals and are rather scary.

Beverly Carlton, a boisterous, self-centered buffoon, played energetically by Eric Smith, blows in and out, but not before doing Maggie a secret favor. The problem? How to get rid of one Loraine Sheldon. The favor? Phone and pretend to be her English boy friend proposing marriage!

Loraine, played with nasty self centeredness by Ashley Racz, at first falls for the proposal, but Whiteside helps her see the light. Her vindictiveness against Maggie is turned into charm toward Jefferson to steal him away from Maggie, and secure his play for herself to play the lead. Loraine is the focus of a funny bit. A radio technician setting up for a live broadcast can't take his eyes off the beautiful actress. He bumps into walls and furniture each time he dreamily walks through the room with cables and equipment. Played wonderfully by Jane Liu it is a very funny side interlude.

When the trick to break up Jefferson and Maggie seems all but complete, Maggie becomes so upset that Whiteside sees he has really made a mess of things and must put things right. That is when whirling dervish Banjo shows up. Katrina Bacome plays Banjo as an out of control prankster who, upon arrival, chases Nurse Preen around the room before a laughing Whiteside can put his wheelchair between them.

Together Banjo and Whiteside sort out the mess Whiteside has made and lead us to a happy ending for our two lovebirds. Let's just say that Miss Sheldon's femme fatale days will be taken on the road, courtesy of a mummy case newly arrived from Egypt and destined to be returned to sender, full!