



Late Company a little gem
from d² productions

Description

A gutsy play by Canada's hot young playwright Jordan Tannahill

By **Byron Toben**

d² productions has been putting on some satisfying plays without much heralding locally. I enjoyed its *The Shadow Box* at the Mainline "main stage" (102 seats) last April.

It recently re-appeared at the Mainline even more intimate 'minimain' (45 seats) with the gutsy *Late Company* by the hottest young playwright in Canada, as described by both NOW magazine and the Montreal Gazette, **Jordan Tannahill**.

Mr. Tannahill was only 23 when he wrote this play.

Director **Dale Hayes** (over 100 directing credits to her name in addition to teaching and acting herself) has assembled a talented cast portraying two families.

The plot involves a host family inviting a guest family to a dinner. The hosts are Debra (**Helena Levitt**, who impressed us as Andrea Dworkin in Waterworks Company's *Aftermath*) and husband Michael (**Sterling Mawhinney**). Arriving late are guests Tamara (**Leigh Ann Taylor**), her husband Bill (**Nick Walker**) accompanied by their son, Curtis (**Anthony Schuller**).

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It becomes apparent that the title of the play relates not only to the guests' late arrival, but to the fact that the hosts had lost their only son a few years earlier. The layers of the script gradually reveal that the deceased son committed suicide, largely because of bullying, and that Curtis was the schoolmate bully leader.

So instead of the dinner allaying suspicions, it confirms each family's worst fears. The hosts still blame the guests, the guests blame the hosts for not suppressing the dead son's gay dressing and mannerisms. He brought it on himself. This results in an early departure.

Powerful performances in a timely show.

d² has announced it will be "exclusively producing works by Canadian playwrights, with an emphasis on emerging artists". *Late Company* is an excellent choice to lead off this policy. Suicide is now the second highest cause of death for youth between 10 and 24. Cyberbullying is prevalent in this trend. Indeed, Mr. Tannahill states that this play was inspired by a teen suicide in Ottawa. My own theatre companion du soir remembered a pre-teen double suicide by twin girls in her native Vancouver, albeit for a more mundane reason than bullying (parents cutting off TV access).

Late Company ends at the Mainline at 2 pm on November 19.

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Images: Caleigh Crow

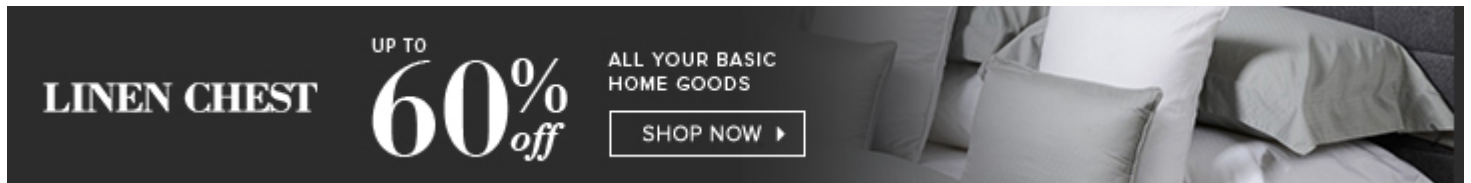
Feature image: Top left to right: Sterling Mawhinney (Michael), Dale Hayes (Director/Producer), Helena Levitt



(Deb) and Nick Walker (Bill) Bottom left to right: Max Mehran (Associate Producer) Anthony Schuller (Curtis), Leigh Ann Taylor (Tamara)

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Byron Toben is the immediate past-president of the Montreal Press Club.



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