

# Angel Street at The Theatre Company of RI



Living in the big city, like Providence, can be fun. But sometimes, it's good to get away from the city, especially in the summer. The Theatre Company of Rhode Island, at the Purple Cat Winery in Chepachet, presents the play *Angel Street (Gaslight)*, through June 26. It's the story of a husband versus his wife and a wily police detective, two of whom are after a reported treasure trove of rubies. Who will crack under the pressure first?

Set in 1880s London, the play is a Victorian thriller written by Patrick Hamilton, often most remembered as *Gaslight*. It is set in a time when although people were generally polite, they could be cruel. It was also a time before homes were wired with electricity. In London and the United States, gas lines were run so that illumination could be provided for the entire house. In fact, gas lighting was, for a while, in competition with electric lighting since an entire network of gaslight lines were run throughout most cities. There were idiosyncrasies to the old fuel source, and therein lies a crucial element on which the plot of *Angel Street* turns.

Thurber, ever the professional, looks dapper in his pin-striped suit, playing the amiable, yet insistent detective Rough from Scotland Yard. Rough suspects the proper Mr. Manningham, played with vile haughtiness by Steven Taschereau, might actually be a murderer from a crime committed 15 years prior. Mr. Manningham has bullied his poor wife for years, under the guise of wanting to "take care of her." She has not one shred of confidence left in herself or her own thoughts. The older housekeeper Elizabeth (Elizabeth Hopkins) tries to calm Mrs. Manningham, who is played with building, appropriate hysterics by Lisa Scotti-Johnson. The "red herring" in the group is the sassy, young maid Nancy (Sarah Keable), a part filled in the early days on Broadway by a very young Angela Lansbury. The action runs at a heart-pounding pace.

The intimate theater is set with lovely antique pieces to create the right atmosphere. Seating is in a semi-circle, but all seats bring one very close to the action. The only distraction is a middle-of-the-ceiling gaslamp that is never actually lit (but is supposed to be). Since Thurber is quite tall, he nearly runs into it every time he crosses the room. It is a key prop to the scene, but perhaps it could be lifted just a bit higher so the audience doesn't worry about a head injury befalling a lead player.

Artistic director Michael Thurber has chosen the right mystery to *chill* from the heat this time of year in his season of mysteries. Patrons are not apprised of the exact play until two weeks before it opens. If you want to get in on the inside scoop, sign up for the mailing list when you are at the theater. At intermission, free refreshments are served along with a few wines (at a small cost) from the resident Purple Cat Winery.

The drive through the lake-like region to the theater takes you through several charming towns like Harmony and Greenville. The road is lined with generous green trees, ponds brimming with blue water and other people enjoying the leisure benefits of Rhode Island by fishing, kayaking and antiquing. The Purple Cat Winery is set in a relaxed setting, back off the road, and contains the winery, café, reading room, screening room, plenty of walkabout land and the cozy playhouse on the lower level.

*Angel Street continues with performances at the Winery at 8pm on Friday, June 24 and Saturday, June 25, and a matinee performance at 2pm on Sunday, June 26. For more information about The Theatre Company of Rhode Island please visit [tcrionline.com](http://tcrionline.com).*