

## WHEN THE REAPER CALLS

Reviewer – Michael Gray

Two professors take their wives away to a remote cottage for a weekend of fishing and philosophy.

The Epicurean is concerned that the Stoic has lost his zest for life. Imagine what dramas Frayn or Stoppard could make out of this crisis.

But we got Canadian playwright Peter Colley and that bastard genre, the comedy thriller.

In this version, the hideaway is still deep in the Canadian wilderness, but the academics are from Oxford. It's asking a lot of an amateur actor to convince as an intellectual heavyweight, and none of the four really felt as if they were inhabiting their character. The writing partly to blame, I guess.

Boot Banes gave a nicely timed, relaxed comic performance as a Bellamy-style professor, more of a bar-stool philosopher really, with Nick Caton as his younger, more successful nemesis. Nick's was a well-crafted interpretation, with plenty of variety, impressive in the set-pieces like Harlen's homecoming.

Jean Speller was the hippy-ish herbalist, and Clare Williams the scary Dora, who forgets her medication, turns to murder, and impersonates the Grim Reaper in the dramatic dénouement.

Ectoplasm, an Emmaus moment, Kubler-Ross's five stages of dying, plus a sprinkling of famous thinkers, failed to add up to a plausible plot, but there were two great shocks in a tautly paced two hours – an impressive début from director Laura Bennett.

Another nice début from Michael Pruce as the Canadian Mounted boy in blue. I tended to concur with his verdict on this curious quartet: “ You deserve each other !”