

The Morningside Players Present *The Passion of Dracula*



Seated left to right: Steve Bauder, Tess Frazer, Jason Silverman, Cecelia Riddett, Craig Myers Standing left to right: James Armstrong, Bridget Leicester, David Wirth, Patrick Mahaney, Brandon deSpain, Susanna Frazer, Zachary Weg, Mike Mahaney

By Liz Wiesen; article first appeared in the November 2015 issue of **The Morningside Gardens News**

Just in time for the Halloween season, the Morningside Players have mounted another excellent, entertaining production. Derived from Bram Stoker's original novel, "The Passion of Dracula" is an artful mix of romance, classic gothic drama, and, at times, nearly farcical comedy, updated to the English countryside of the 1930s, site of the ominous Whitby Sanitorium, where some of the inmates have been growing progressively weaker and weirder since the arrival of a mysterious Count who has just moved into the castle next door. The 20th century setting allows for some pleasurable changes: in a send-up of the burgeoning field of psychoanalysis, the Freudian therapist Dr. Helga Van Zandt becomes one of the undead (in a fabulous over-the-top performance by Cecelia Riddett). And while Professor Van Helsing (Dracula's famous adversary, played by James Armstrong), arrives with instructions on how to kill a vampire, it is the lovely "damsel," Wilhelmina (Tess Frazer) object of the Count's evil mesmerizing desire, who saves herself and the day. Kudos are also in order for the play's impressively high production values; a fully-realized set (Mike Mahaney), atmospheric music to build tension, and superb lighting, fog and explosion effects to evoke danger and violence offstage (Patrick Mahaney). (For more information on the play and about upcoming shows please visit www.morningsideplayers.org, or call 646-200-5089.)