

Stop! Please Stop!...You're Killing Me!

by Sharlene Hartman

Great food, good laughs, a little dancing and a challenging murder to solve; can't think of a better way to spend an evening. And this is exactly what **The Killing**



Jon Avner

Kompany has been producing for the past 14 years. **Jon Avner**, an established actor and writer, founded **The Killing Kompany** in 1993. Since then Jon and Kompany

have been commissioned for many corporate events including American Express, General Electric and Citigroup; plus just about any kind of private party you can imagine.

The **Thayer Hotel** in West Point, has been a "Killing" venue for years. At first The KK did only a couple of shows a season (December - April) but now they do one a month. The Killing Kompany fans come often, sometimes dressing up in costumes that reflect the theme of the night. The cast is different and it's always a new show. The titles are created months before the performance but "the show itself is usually written about a week before, sometimes less. It's like writing for **Jay Leno** or **Bill Maher**. This way the plot, the facts, and all the humor is timely."

December 8 is *Murder At The Godfather's Holiday Party*, January 12: *Death By Disco*, February 16: *Till Death Do Them Part* (in honor of Valentine's Day), March 15: *The St. Patrick's Day*

Murder, and April 19 will bring *Taxed For Murder*.

"Fans send us information about people who are attending and we'll make up special evidence so they become part of the crime...we also make up generic evidence so we can pick people out of the audience. This way everybody feels like they are part of the show...they don't have to learn any lines; don't have to do anything other than be themselves."

The "Mystery" takes place before and after each course of food. Background and dance music is played between the acts, and people actually dance. "At The Thayer we are dressed as NY State police troopers or US Army Military Police. The police find evidence which leads the audience to the real killer and to themselves as guest suspects...then the real fun starts because they get their 15 seconds of fame. They try and guess who the killer or killers are and they win a prize. Prizes are also given to the funniest audience members. Sometimes the audience comes up with funnier lines than anybody."

I asked Jon about the "voyeurs", the people that might not want to be actively involved. "Everyone gets a safety message and if they don't want to be a part of the show they just tell the 'policeman' before the show starts but most people want to take part, that's why they come."

Jon writes the entire "mystery" and rehearses with the other actors for about 15-20 minutes before the show. They get a "one page plotline, perhaps one or two lines" and he suggests possible improvisations. "The professional Broadway, TV and film actors are

concealed among the diners, and at any time you may wind up part of the plot. We're not campy, we don't go overboard...it's funny but it's real. Some of the actors are also singers, dancers, and musicians so we give them the opportunity to do a song, a dance number, whatever." Everybody gets a chance to shine.

Can you believe this is all from a former entertainment attorney? Jon always did have a voice for the stage...a judge once said "counselor please...I can hear you!" He does love performing for a live audience, and says, "although this is entertainment and comedy, there's nothing wrong with making people laugh...it's a good deed."

Well, I know I'm going to *Death By Disco*...but how can I resist *The Godfather's Holiday Party*, it just wouldn't be Christmas!



Anyone can be a suspect in the Killing Kompany murder-mysteries!

For more information visit the website: www.killingkompany.com or call The Thayer Hotel for reservations at 845-446-4731. It's \$90 and that includes dinner, the show, and one drink...and of course laughing till your sides ache!