



'Quarry' is a taut stunner in the hands of a stellar cast

By MEGAN GILLIS

Staff Writer

GANANOQUE — Everybody's got secrets.

They lurk beneath the still water of daily life like a corpse, wrapped in heavy chains and dumped in an old quarry.

Mo Bock's new mystery thriller, at the Thousand Islands playhouse until September 30, is the story of what happens when a stranger goes diving in the murky depths of memory.

In the hands of a stellar cast of national-calibre actors, it's a taut stunner that grabs the audience by their throats, propels them out of their seats with the retort of gunfire and leaves them gasping through every twist and turn to an explosive climax.

Quarry tells the story of David (David Fox), a reclusive writer who retreated into his own world when his lover, Sally, left him two years earlier. But her taunting, teasing spectre, played by Keira Loughran, haunts him and his new novel. It's the tale of a reclusive writer who meets a vibrant, volatile young runaway and stops her with two bullets when she tries to walk out his door.

When Marny (Brooke Johnson) arrives unannounced at David's doorstep saying she wants to turn his story into a movie, she demands to know where fantasy ends and fact begins. Do the real-life parallels to his novel — bullet holes in the wall, an abandoned quarry, the pic-

FAST FACTS

What: *Quarry* by Mo Bock and directed by Gillian Raby.

When: Runs until September 30 with performances Tuesday through Sunday at 8 p.m. and Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday matinees at 2:30 p.m.

Where: The Thousand Islands Playhouse, Gananoque.

How much: \$27 for adults, \$25 for seniors and \$14 for students and children. Call (613) 382-7020.

ture of a real young woman no one's heard from for two years on the cover — mean David's novel is really a confession?

"That face, shimmering beneath the water, eyes wide open," Marny says, holding David's book jacket. "Who is she by the way. Is she someone you made up?"

"She's as real as you are," he replies.

Is Sally dead? Did David kill her? David himself can't say. But her hold on his imagination is so powerful she's a siren, a Lolita in combat boots, cajoling him to the same end as his fictional alter ego.

And Marny has her own dark, guilty secret that's sent her on a quest to find Sally.

The play takes aim at the idea that fiction is necessarily autobiographical, that memory is as true and immutable as videotape and

that women are powerless victims. Sally, even as a memory, is more powerful than any weapon.

"I don't know you," David says. "Oh, David, I am what I am," she replies. "You and I, together forever."

This is a mystery driven by character and craft and it makes for mesmerizing theatre. It's so tightly plotted by Bock and focused by the actors and director Gyllian Raby that, at 90 minutes with intermission, it doesn't need to be a second longer, although the oddly-placed act break jars.

Fox is using his summer break from the national tour of the Governor General Award-winning *The Drawer Boy*, for which he won a Dora Award, to appear in *Quarry*. It's an understated performance in which confusion, loneliness and perhaps the capacity for explosive violence lurk beneath dry wit.

Johnson, a Gemini winner for CBC's *Dangerous Offender* and *Conspiracy of Silence*, is painfully intense as Marny.

Loughran's Sally is both vulnerable and sinister, a kind of gun-toting Evelyn Lau.

Director Gyllian Raby writes that fine actors find the truth of a story. The director floods the play and they go diving, past empty bottles, root mire and rusty cans to find bedrock.

"What's the story," she asks. "Who's the character? Why?"

What they found is a disturbing revelation. You'll see.