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Producer/Interviewer/Reviewer

“Arlington Weekly News TV”

Comcast CHANNEL 69

Broadcast (2008): Thurs., 9/18, 6 p.m.; Sat., 9/20, 10:30 a.m.; Mon., 9/22, 8:30 p.m.

THE AMERICAN CENTURY THEATER - - Ira Levin’s “Dr. Cook’s Garden”

Author Ira Levin is known for his scary and suspense-filled stories like, “Rosemary’s Baby,” “The Stepford Wives’ and others. Today’s subject by Levin is, “**Dr. Cook’s Garden,**” which opened on Broadway in 1967. *The American Century Theater* is now producing the show at Gunston Theatre II in Arlington. This riveting mystery is so well acted that you won’t want to miss it. The setting is a small town in Vermont in 1966. A lone physician, “Doc” Cook has been practicing there for many years and is well-respected. David Schmidt is so believable and likeable as the old doctor. A 27 year old former resident of this area, Jim Tennyson (JB Bissex), has become a physician in Chicago and returns home to see Dr. Cook and others for a few days. Bissex plays the young doctor with respect towards old “Doc” Cook, but soon suspects that something odd is going on. Alone in the office, Jim stumbles upon some medical records marked with a letter “R”. When he asks Cook about this designation, Cook said it meant that “rest” was prescribed. Not satisfied, Jim pushed on wondering why Dr. Cook has so many serious heavy-duty drugs like chloroform and cyanide in solution form. The old doc seems to resent questions from this whippersnapper, but attempts to answer them. The story moves on to a surprising ending, as you might expect. Director Ellen Dempsey does a nice job of building the suspense. Nice set, too, by Trena Weiss-Neill. “**Dr. Cook’s Garden**” plays through Oct. 4. Call 703-998-4555 for tickets. The website is www.americancentury.org.

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