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# The perfect antidote

**P**SYCHOTIC Obsession and horrific bodily mutilation aren't exactly the stuff of a traditional Christmas (except in EastEnders, maybe).

But leading amateur theatre group Maskers Theatre Company believe their production of the blood-spattered Stephen King horror yarn Misery will come as a welcome antidote to the sentimental over-indulgence of the festive season.

They settled on it as their new year production after the show that had been intended to fill the slot, Arsenic and Old Lace, fell through at the last minute.

Philippa Taylor, a veteran of the long-established company, is directing the play, which graphically depicts the terrifying ordeal of a best-selling author at the hands of a

mentally deranged nurse who just happens to be his "number one fan".

"I was forced to look for a replacement play at very, very short notice. I spotted Misery, which was a two-hander, and it looked as if it was going to be technically challenging and an antidote to the Christmas spirit," she says.

"I thought it would be a good contrast and would appeal to people who perhaps wouldn't normally come to see our productions."

Anyone familiar with the book, film or play - or even the French and Saunders spoof -

will be aware it contains a number of shudderingly horrific scenes in which our reluctant hero is put through the kind of bodily "workout" that would confound the most flexible yoga master.

Philippa - who, having never read the book or seen either the film or play, will certainly be bringing a fresh eye to the production - promises the Maskers will not be stinting on the body horror.

She reveals: "There are some very shocking moments on stage which, with lighting tricks and sound, will, I think, keep the audience on the edge of its seat."

Misery is at the Nuffield Theatre, Southampton, from January 16 to 20. The play starts at 7.30pm all days except Saturday and Sunday, when it starts at 8pm. For tickets and information, call the Nuffield box office on 023 8067 1771.

ANDREW WHITE

## Misery, Maskers Theatre Company

Nuffield Theatre, January 16-20

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**Daily Echo**

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During the presentation some am-dram groups will perform an excerpt from a show to highlight the high standards of productions in this area.

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