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auditions



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audience reviews

Three Days of Rain, Capital Stage Aboard the Delta King

Review: Fantastic. (Just saw it last night.) It's the first show I've seen at Delta King and it will not be the last. Watching theatre that is so well directed and so well acted reminded me of why live theatre is so essential. The beauty is the way it lives and breathes, the way theatre should. Easily on par, if not better than the 20 or so shows I've seen in Ashland. Go, it is worth every penny and more. (The experience is definitely better than anything you'll see at the movies.)

- Cindy

Review: What if you stumbled across your parent's journal, written at approximately the same age that you are currently? Our parents are always our parents, with all of the stern taskmaster persona that we remember from our youth. But what were they like when they were younger? What sorts of things would you read into the youthful scrawls of the parent, based on knowledge of the qualities of the adult parent?

This question is at the core of Richard Greenberg's "Three Days of Rain," now playing at Capital Stage on the Delta King Riverboat in Sacramento, directed by Peter Mohrmann.

Sometimes called "a puzzle in two acts," "Three Days of Rain" was a runner-up for the 1998 Pulitzer Prize, which may be apparent by the eloquent use of language by playwright Greenberg. It tells the story about how the life choices made by parents and the back stories crafted through the years affect the lives of their adult children. Of course, as in any gripping story, they are all members of a prominent, but dysfunctional family.

Walker (Jonathan Rys Williams) and Nan (Megan Smith), adult offspring

of the legendary architect, Ned, who has recently died, have come together in Ned's old apartment and are ready to go to the attorney's office to meet their friend Pip (Gillen Morrison), soap opera icon and son of Ned's partner, Theo, for a reading of the will.

The angst-ridden Walker has just returned from Italy, where he disappeared some time ago. "We thought you were dead this time," says his sister, exposing the fact that "disappearing" is something Walker does rather than face his problems.

The early scene between the two is tense, uneasy, with a lot of unspoken emotion. Nan has always been the responsible one, who now lives in Boston with two kids and a husband and is still trying to keep everything together. Walker engages in flights of fancy and his speech becomes more and more expansive as he paces around the small room speculating about the life his father lived in this garret, at the start of his career.

He confides that he found his father's journal stuck under the mattress of the room's bed and he begins reading it, more, it seems, in anger at his father than in curiosity about the life of his emotionally distant parent. "You know, the thing is with people who never talk, the thing is you always suppose they're harboring some enormous secret. But, just possibly, the secret is, they have absolutely nothing to say," he says, reading the journal's cryptic opening entry: "April 3rd to April 5th. Three days of rain."

We meet Pip following the reading of the will, where things have not gone as Walker has expected and which sets Walker off into a depressive, uncommunicative mood while Nan and Pip reminisce about their childhood and reveal more than they intended.

Act 2 takes place 35 years previous, the weekend of the starting of the journal and we discover what the cryptic entries imply, all leading up to an ending so abrupt that the audience wasn't really sure the show had ended until the cast came out to take its bows and the house lights came up.

This is a remarkable cast. Megan Smith has an amazingly expressive face, which runs the gamut of emotions from Nan, the stern taskmaster and loving sister, to Lina, the free spirit. She creates two distinct characters, inhabiting each fully and making each unique through body language as much as through accent and actual script.

Gillen Morrison has an easy affability, a devil-may-care attitude which was as engaging in the father, Theo, as it was in the son, Pip. His dark moments are brief, but he makes the most of them.

But it is Jonathan Rhys Williams who will take your breath away, with portrayals of the tormented Walker and the shy, stuttering Ned so completely different from each other that it's difficult to find the Act 1 actor in the Act 2 character. He is mesmerizing.

Rebecca Redmond deserves mention for her costume design, which so clearly delineates 1995 life from 1960 life.

"Three Days of Rain" received lukewarm reviews in its recent revival in New York, starring Julia Roberts, which is a shame because with the right cast this is an intelligent, emotional, often funny, thoroughly enjoyable play -- and Capital Stage has "the right cast."
- Bev Sykes

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