

THEATRE REVIEW

Conspiracy season ends on high note

“The Dunes” last play for troupe at Foulds Theater

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Theater Conspiracy’s last play at the Foulds Theater was a serious, understated drama that left wide emotional voids that should move any mature, subtle viewer. It portrays the unraveling of the life of an



COURTESY PHOTO

The cast of “The Dunes,” the Theater Conspiracy’s final performance at the Foulds Theater.

aging actress, Laura Robertson, who has lost herself in failed relationships and the past and is allowing her home and family to slip away from her.

Written by award-winning playwright, Craig Pospisil, “The Dunes” was inspired by “The Cherry Orchard”, by Anton Chekhov, 19th century Russian playwright. However, the scene is changed to the East Hamptons and drugs, ecstasy in this case, are thrown in. And, as the character Troy says, “Bring on the drugs.”

The strange history of “The Cherry Orchard” might help explain the dramatic tightrope walk that occurs on the stage of the Foulds. Chekhov apparently wrote the play as a comedy but it was originally directed as a tragedy. This duality has challenged directors ever since.

This is not a play that goes for big laughs or heavy sobs. This is not to say there aren’t moments of humor or pathos, there are plenty, but that they are rarely heavy-handed. There is so little pandering to the audience you might feel a bit more like a spy than you are comfortable with.

Pospisil apparently thought of the play when he saw land being aggressively developed in the Hamptons. “The Cherry Orchard” ends with the sounds of Cherry trees being chopped down on newly sold land. He is an award-winning playwright (“Somewhere in Between” and “Months on End”) and the head writer for “theAt-rainplays” which are written in the course of a single trip on the A train (a subway line in NYC).

Not only was this play well directed by Michael Breen but there were several outstanding performances, which included a sort of performance by the playhouse itself. Coincidentally, the play reflects on the fact that the Theater Conspiracy is losing its home at the Foulds. It was difficult to forget this was unintentional.

The set of the play was thoroughly convincing and the never seen dunes become a realistic extension of it. Sound also features in this play, driveway exits and

entrances replacing the sound of chopping wood. Also, the theme of developing land ties in nicely with ongoing events here in Lee County.

This is a play where the women ruled. The part of Laura, played by Lauren Drexler, was played with hesitant weariness which underscored the overconfidence of the character in the face of her diminishing status. Vanessa, played by Laurie Genet Preston, was acted with terrific tension as she tried to open her mother’s eyes to no avail. I was more impressed since I knew she had had trouble with her voice earlier in the day. Her mother’s relationship with a drug addict comes under question showing the fragility of Laura’s character. Madison Mitchell portrayed Anne well as

If you go

- ▶ **What:** “The Dunes”
- ▶ **When:** Thursday through Saturday, May 5 at 8 p.m.
- ▶ **Where:** Foulds Theater, Alliance for the Arts, 10091 McGregor Blvd., Fort Myers
- ▶ **Info:** 936-3239, email info@theatreconspiracy.org, or go to <http://theatreconspiracy.org>.

a youth quickly discovering just how little reliance she can place on the adult world and opting for the influences of drugs and terrible music, instead.

The subplot of Anne’s ecstasy-riddled, summer romance with a poorer, dare I call him aspiring musician, carries most of the humor in the play, along with Garret’s obsession with vodka.

Having turned out such a fine production, I have my fingers crossed that artistic director Bill Taylor will take the Theater Conspiracy to even greater heights when they find their new home or in the found theater productions he will otherwise resort to. ■

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