

Every Brilliant Thing is “winning”

Review for local Greater Lansing Theatre Database
by John Roche
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By the time the lights went up on Scene 1 of *Every Brilliant Thing*, by Duncan Macmillan, actor, Spencer Smith had every one of us eating out of his hands. The irony of the device that brings it about, his greeting nearly every audience member as he enters the theatre, pays off well both for the actor and the audience. The fact that the subjects of the play are depression, suicidal thoughts, and, well, life, I guess, there is a lot to say, even for the short 70 minute runtime). Oh, by the way, he keeps a list of “brilliant things”, his favorite things, that make any thought of suicide silly. This list is a dividing line, for him, between joy and despair.

No pretense here. A very spare set and barebones production (Director and Properties/Set Designer, Chad Swan-Badgero) lends well to the very warm and engaging delivery of Smith who is so winning (there is a lot of humor in the script) all underplayed deftly by this fine actor whom it would be very easy to confuse with the character he is playing (who, strangely, never receives a name).

The story revolves around some rough times during the growing up of our narrator, involving him, his dad, his mom, and several other significant others who played roles in the life of this young man. Mental illness is one of those significant others.

I hesitate to add plot details but the script has charms it would be a shame to miss! Especially for the truly hopeful, among us, a group I assume still exists. The show is more fun than it is a downer, believe me. I have just one problem with the show.

I can't accept the premise that this list of things is so important/impactful and/or that cramming it with entries until it's at least a million items long can save it from triteness. I was never able to get excited about it. But this is a product of my own cynical nature. Our narrator is someone who never really gives up hope.

Every Brilliant Thing continues through February 10 (Thursdays through Saturdays at 8 pm; Sundays at 2 pm; at Miller Performing Arts Center 6025 Curry Lane, Lansing, MI 48911; 517 927-3016)

