

“Good” Is Great

“Good People” Review by Paul Wozniak

Nov. 14, 2012

If not for the accents and references to South Boston, the economic and cultural situations explored in David Lindsay-Abaire’s “Good People” could have been set in Michigan — or anywhere, really. The story of a low-income, middle-aged single mother struggling to find a job and pay her rent describes our current national situation. While the characters in “Good People” are familiar, they’re not used as tropes to hammer in a heavy message about injustice. Instead, Lindsay-Abaire’s script offers abundant richness through ambiguity, which director Blake Bowen seizes upon in this superb Peppermint Creek production.

Shannon Rafferty plays Margie, the coarse but kind “mouthie from Southie” whose lack of formal education beyond high school limits her to near minimum wage employment. The play begins with Margie, due to her perpetual lateness, being fired — a fate she cannot escape despite tactical bargaining and pleading. When she discovers her former high school boyfriend Mike (Brad Rutledge) is a successful local doctor, she seeks out his help to find a job. But their reunion soon turns into a culture clash fueled by opposing perspectives of their shared past.

The entire cast shines in their respective roles — from Deborah Tomlinson and Samantha Seybert as Margie’s bantering bingo buddies to Teri Brown as Mike’s sophisticated wife — giving colorful life to the sparse set. For their part, Rutledge and Rafferty each ground their characters in natural emotions and share authentic chemistry that allows the audience to empathize with all sides.

Director Bowen incredibly keeps the play flowing, even with characters seated for entire scenes. The results provoke piercing questions regarding work ethic versus fate that challenges every assumption people have about the working poor. It’s also one of the best community theater productions this season.

“Good People”

Peppermint Creek Theatre Co.

Nov. 8-17

8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, 2 p.m. Sunday

Miller Performing Arts Center, 6025 Curry Lane, Lansing

\$15 adults/\$10 students and seniors

(517) 927-3016

peppermintcreek.org