

Next Fall Opening Night Review

TE Klunzinger
March 23, 2012

Opening night of Peppermint Creek's production of Geoffrey Nauffts' "Next Fall" at Creole Gallery was truly an event, blessed as it was with the presence of the legendary Selma Hollander. But more than that, the enthusiastic crowd saw the mid-Michigan premiere of this superlative play, essentially a drama but rich with humor, well-acted throughout to its heartbreaking emotional climax.

Russ Jameson (late of MSU as Rusty Broughton) co-stars with Jonas Greenberg as Luke and Adam, gay lovers in contemporary New York City who would seem to be badly mismatched but somehow make it work. Luke is a devout Christian who freely admits sin and prays after sex, Adam is a hypochondriac reductive self-doubting atheist, but they have both loved, and lived with, each other for the past five years. The immediate framework of the play presents Luke's family and friends gathering after he's been critically injured, with many flashbacks detailing his relationships with each.

BIG CREDITS to the well-choreographed running crew who kept the show moving through seemingly-impossible scene changes within the tight confines of the Creole stage. (The playwright should have given a little more thought to stuff like this.)

Brad Rutledge and Lela Ivey play Luke's long-divorced parents from Tallahassee, deftly avoiding what could be stereotypes of a distant father and trailer-trash mother. While his mother Arlene gently acknowledges and accepts Luke's homosexuality - and his partner - his father never seems to get it (but how could he not know?). Arlene is probably the best-written part and with it Ms. Ivey kinda steals the show.

Luke's years-past lover Brandon is well-played by Michael Banghart (nephew of Emily Banghart English Clark) while Adam's sometime employer (candle-shop owner and self-proclaimed fag hag Holly) is the excellent Shannon Rafferty, last seen in *God of Carnage*.

Director Chad Badgero has created a superb, well-paced and well-acted show which deserves to be appreciated and remembered as one of the highlights of this theater season. Yes, there's a lot else going on in local theater just now, but you must make room in your schedule to see "Next Fall." (And look for the teletubby when you do.)

Next Fall

www.peppermintcreek.org

March 22 - 25 & 29 - 31 - 8pm (2pm Sunday the 25th only; no second Sunday.)

\$15 general admission

\$10 student/senior 55+

Creole Gallery, 1218 Turner St. Old Town

372-0945 Arts Tickets Box Office