

# Thanksgiving dinner with Peppermint Creek's 'The Humans' hits home

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I've never complained about good acting, but I am sorry. The players in "The Humans" are so damn good.

It's easier to watch afflictions when the melancholy is merely a fabrication by actors. But when good acting makes the suffering seem real, it can be hard to endure.

Rick Dethlefsen is Erik Blake, an aging father dealing with shame. Gini Larson is his wife, Deirdre, who's trying to control her impulses. They struggle caring for Fiona "Momo" Blake — played by Barbara Stauffer — who has serious dementia. Leigh Christopher is Aimee Blake — the daughter with intestinal troubles and recent loses.

In "The Humans," the foursome gathers at a dubious New York apartment to share Thanksgiving with daughter, and her live-in boyfriend. Hecksel is the often Bridgid Blake, and Clark plays an out-of-Richard Saad.

After some drinking, bickering turns to arguing. Ribbing turns to insults. Horrific are revealed. What as an uncomfortable together turns into the Thanksgiving from Hell.

Sad moments earn tears. Jokes and funny bits peppered throughout the play win genuine laughs.

Having a fantastic, two-story set with a spiral staircase adds to the authenticity. The design by Tracy Smith and Geoff Stauffer had to be built off-site. It required a building code approval before the actors could move from floor to floor.

At times, voices get lost inside the cavernous Central United Methodist Church. Their padded folding chairs can be tough to inhabit during a 100-minute play without intermission. For "The Humans," I think I would squirm in my seat no matter the chair.



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