

Peppermint Creek's "The Humans" is Amazingly Real

*Review by Jane Zussman
Oct 31, 2019*

The Humans is... real. Amazingly real people on an amazingly real, solid, two-story set.

This remarkable set represents the opposite end of the spectrum from Peppermint Creek's ephemeral, mobile, time-traveling first set in this space (Central United Methodist Church) for *Bright Star*. Kudos to designers Tracy Smith and Geoff Stauffer and builders Smith and Stauffer, with Leon Green Like Pline, and David Hess.

Stephen Karam's script is a slice of the life of a family at Thanksgiving 2014. References to 9/11, Hurricane Sandy, and the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire are helpfully explained in the program. Those events are part of the backdrop of disaster that hovers behind this loving but challenged family.



Director Emily English Clark has skillfully piloted a remarkable cast of six

through this complex, engaging script. Rick Dethlefsen and Gini Larson are the maybe-not-so-happily married parents. Sally Hecksel is the daughter/hostess with Joe Clark as her live-in boyfriend. Leigh Christopher is another daughter with career and personal challenges — and Barb Stauffer is “Momo” the grandmother mostly lost to dementia, but bringing a sense of loving history as well as despair. Everyone is doing their best, and putting up a good front, but coping and dodging assorted life roadblocks. All of the actors are so real, you forget they are actors. The on-top-of-itself dialogue must have been very difficult to master, but we experience it as just... real.

This is an engaging study of the human condition, ironically entertaining, with dashes of humor — and probably a few cast members who will remind you of people in your own family — unsettling. *The Humans* continues through November 10.

The Temple House @ Central United Methodist Church
215 N. Capital Ave Lansing, MI 48933