

"The Dining Room" Pokes Fun at Upper-Middle Class Family Life

By Kayla Gaffney

"The Dining Room" is a comedy of manners play centered around White Anglo-Saxon Protestant families in different time periods. The play features different characters, scenes and situations that all occur in the same dining room. The same actresses and actors perform as different characters in each scene throughout the play.

Co-director of the play, Kaylin Kellin says while being a comedy, the play evokes more than just laughter from its audience.

"It's a sweet play. It has some funny moments, has some serious moments, has some crazy moments and then at the end it's a somber kind of thing. All of these people have gone through so much, you really recognize who they are. It makes you feel all the emotions."

American playwright A.R. Gurney wrote the play to poke fun at the upper-middle class while showing different aspects of typical family dynamics.

Co-director Michael Hegger says although the play features this particular group in society, everyone can relate to it in some way.

"We can all relate to this aspect. We all have these problems in our lives where our grandmother has alzheimer's and we don't know how to deal with the fact that she can't remember who her kids are. Or our lives are a mess and we need to find a place to ground ourselves in our childhood or in our past so we can move forward. These are two different scenes that come up in our show and both of them you can relate to almost everyday life."

When asked what kind of audience the play is targeting, Hegger says that it isn't targeting anyone in particular.

"It's not made for one group in particular, it's made for everyone. It can resonate with the youngest to the oldest people in the crowd."

And when being asked why people should go see the play, Kellin says it will put a smile on the faces of the people who see it and because it's so relatable, especially to college students.

"I think people should come see it because it's something to make people smile or brighten their day, it's a sweet play. The significance of it is that everybody goes through things and everybody goes through life and not knowing when the next bombshell is going to drop on them. I think college students should see it because college people are always questioning their life and this play kind of relates to that as well."

Hegger says that having a handful of actors playing a wide variety of characters was both thrilling for him as a director and for the actors as well.

“Every time we have someone come out on stage they’re a new character. It’s fun to act with those people because you have this rapport with these actors and they know what you’re looking for in each scene. And they can ask ‘how do I make each character different’ and the discovery of making every character different is a great journey for the director and the actor and it’s something that we can share.”

“The Dining Room” is the first show of the spring semester in the Department of Theatre and Dance’s Second Stage Series and will be performed in the Wendy Kurka Rust Flexible Theatre March 27-28, 2015 at 7:30 p.m. at Southeast’s River Campus. Tickets are available at the River Campus Box Office.