

Cabin Pressures: "The Melville Boys," at the Green Room through April 27

Written by Mike Schulz

Wednesday, 23 April 2008 02:10

- [Download Acala DivX to iPod](#)
- [59.95\\$ Adobe Dreamweaver CS5 MAC cheap oem](#)
- [Buy OEM Dreamweaver CS5: The Missing Manual](#)
- [Buy Cheap Autodesk 3ds Max 2014 \(64-bit\)](#)
- [Download Mariner Write 3 MAC](#)
- [Buy Cheap Microsoft Office Access 2007](#)
- [Buy Luxion KeyShot Pro 4 + Animation + KeyShotVR \(en,fr,de,it,pl,es,cs,ja,ko\)](#)
- [39.95\\$ DAZ Bryce 6.1 MAC cheap oem](#)
- [Download Microsoft Works 9](#)
- [Buy Autodesk AutoCAD Architecture 2010 \(32 bit\) \(en\)](#)
- [Discount - Lynda.com - Illustrator CC One-on-One: Advanced](#)
- [Download Autodesk Alias Surface 2014 \(64-bit\)](#)
- [Buy OEM Adobe Premiere Pro CS5.5](#)



The Green Room's production of the comedic drama *The Melville Boys* features a great deal of charm, some dramatic heft, and more than a few laughs. Yet it's difficult to describe precisely where the charm, heft, and laughs stem from, because the show's finest moments have little to do with Norm Foster's script, and lots to do with the inflections and invention of its performers. The playwright's offering is, at best, perfectly pleasant, but the Green Room's acting quartet of Jonathan Gregoire, Andrew Harvey, Colleen Winters, and Abby Van Gerpen - under the lively direction of Donna Hare - oftentimes lends it authentic depth of feeling, and that depth results in warmer, more *honest* humor, and more earned sentiment, than even Foster may have anticipated.

Case in point: There's a scene in Act II between Owen (Gregoire), the younger of two siblings on a weekend retreat in a Minnesota cabin, and Loretta (Van Gerpen), the younger of two

Cabin Pressures: "The Melville Boys," at the Green Room through April 27

Written by Mike Schulz

Wednesday, 23 April 2008 02:10

siblings living nearby. Although engaged to another woman, Owen spends the night with Loretta, and the following morning, before she departs, Owen sits Loretta down at the breakfast table and says, "I like you. I like you a lot." This, it turns out, received (and deserved) the biggest laugh at Saturday night's performance - not because the words were funny, and not because the situation was particularly funny, but because Gregoire's *reading* was funny. And, as the adage goes, it was funny because it was *true*

.

Gregoire's Owen, the good-time party boy to Harvey's more tightly wound Lee, is impulsive and somewhat irresponsible, but he's not an idiot; he knows how ridiculous it is to be falling for this woman he's only recently met. (Not that you could blame him, considering how unaffectedly enticing Van Gerpen is in her role.) So after Owen makes his "I like you" declaration, he can't seem to help himself; he iterates "I like you a lot" with an aw-shucks, goofball italicization that suggests that even *he* can't believe what he's saying, but damn it, he's saying it anyway. The audience laughs, in part, because the reading is so unexpected, but also because it's so *right*

; the sensationally smart Gregoire, as his character would, is attempting to defuse the tension before Owen's scene with Loretta is allowed to *get* tense.

I realize I'm devoting an inordinate amount of space to the delivery of one particular line, but this one line underscores the best thing about *The Melville Boys*: the performers' ability to dig beneath the text and discover the humanity beneath its rather superficial surface.



Cabin Pressures: "The Melville Boys," at the Green Room through April 27

Written by Mike Schulz

Wednesday, 23 April 2008 02:10

In outline, Foster's script couldn't be simpler, or more vexingly convenient: Two brothers of polar-opposite temperaments (the elder of whom is dying of malignant melanoma) meet two sisters of polar-opposite temperaments (the elder of whom, Winters' Mary, was abandoned by her good-for-nothing husband), and through the subsequent 24 hours, confront issues of responsibility, sibling rivalry, and mortality. Yet as presented here, none of these issues carries much weight. The subject of Lee's terminal illness, especially, is treated with surprising glibness for much of the show's length - the moment when Mary learns he's sick becomes an excuse for a "comedic" crying jag - and Foster is all too fond of easy punchlines and predictably snappy banter. (A typical exchange, initiated by Owen: "You want a beer, Mary?" "No." "Loretta?" "No." "Lee?" "No." "Four beers it is, then!") By the time the playwright begins exploring some genuine emotion in Act II, and gives the brothers some legitimately dramatic exchanges, it's almost too little, too late; the play's later scenes make *The Melville Boys* resemble one of those Very Special Episodes of a wisecracking sitcom.

Brava to Hare, then, for improving upon her material through cleverly orchestrated staging (that rear Green Room staircase is a fantastically utilitarian set piece), and, better still, for guiding her actors toward realistic portrayals in roles that don't always merit them. Winters and Van Gerpen display a touching, sisterly rapport - their vocal cadences match to an eerie degree - and are topnotch individually; Winters has a marvelous moment when Mary's reserve gives way to total irritation ("We put on *dresses* for you!"), and Van Gerpen's sunny, radiant happiness and uncomplicated sensibility turn an only mildly detailed character into a constant delight.

As the frequently aggrieved Lee, the relaxed, focused Harvey is neither a saint nor a mope - just an ordinary working stiff who's probably wittier than most of his acquaintances realize. (Harvey is at his best during his throwaways, as when he forces a quick smile for the insistent Loretta.) And Gregoire is positively spectacular, exploding with anything-goes gusto and collapsing into sullen melancholy; the actor's ache when saying good-bye to Loretta, or facing off against the brother he's terrified to lose, pushes the production into another realm entirely. It's a realm I wish Foster had visited with more frequency, but I'm at least grateful to the Green Room's *The Melville Boys* for allowing us to get there at all.

For tickets, call (309) 786-5660.