

Written by Mike Schulz  
Monday, 15 June 2009 06:00

---

- [Download Microsoft Office Project Standard 2010 with SP1 \(32-bit & 64-bit\)](#)
- [Buy Cheap Nero 9 Reloaded](#)
- [Buy Dreamweaver CS5: The Missing Manual \(en\)](#)
- [Buy OEM Pinnacle Studio 15 HD Ultimate Collection](#)
- [Discount - Cakewalk Sonar 7 Producer Edition](#)
- [Buy OEM Autodesk AutoCAD Design Suite Ultimate 2013 \(64-bit\)](#)
- [Buy Cheap Adobe Creative Suite 4 Web Premium](#)
- [29.95\\$ Nik Software Sharpener Pro 3 MAC cheap oem](#)
- [Download ABest Video to RM RMVB MPEG Converter](#)
- [Download Ashampoo Firewall Pro](#)
- [39.95\\$ Eset Smart Security 5 \(32-bit\) cheap oem](#)
- [9.95\\$ Adobe Photoshop CS5 on Demand cheap oem](#)
- [79.95\\$ Nik Software Complete Collection 2013 MAC cheap oem](#)



Over my many years of theatre-going, there isn't a stage trilogy I've enjoyed quite the way I've enjoyed the Pazinski-family comedies of author Tom Dudzick, a trio of lightly philosophical, understatedly touching, devastatingly funny plays that began with 1994's *Over the Tavern* and continued with 1998's *King o' the Moon*

.

And I don't think I've ever loved a stage production quite the way I love the Richmond Hill Barn Theatre's current *The Last Mass at St. Casimir's*, the climactic chapter (written in 2002) not only in Dudzick's trilogy, but in Richmond Hill's, as Geneseo's Barn Theatre produced *Over the Tavern* in the summer of 2005, and *King o' the Moon* in the summer of 2007.

All three were directed by Susan Simosky. All three have starred Angela Rathman as the harried, good-humored matriarch Ellen Pazinski. And if you were lucky enough to have seen the first two offerings in Dudzick's cycle, and responded to them with the appreciation and delight that I did, you might find the experience of *St. Casimir's* so emotionally overwhelming that you never want it to end. I didn't bring a friend to Richmond Hill's latest and I'm kind of glad I didn't, because I'm relieved that no one was there to see me crying on the drive home. But I also wish

Written by Mike Schulz  
Monday, 15 June 2009 06:00

---

I had every single person I know accompanying me to Friday night's production; so unassuming yet so exhilarating, it was the sort of joyous good time that reaffirms your faith in what theatre can do.

Just in case I've now scared off anyone who *didn't* catch parts one and two, let me assure you that this trilogy-ender stands alone just fine; prior knowledge of the Pazinskis and their continuing saga is helpful, and enriches the show's humor and poignancy, but is absolutely not required. And in case my effusiveness has anyone dreading a night of "good for you" theatre, rest assured: At heart and by design, *The Last Mass at St. Casimir's*, like its predecessors, is a two-hour stage sitcom. But it's a *sensational* stage sitcom.

Taking place in Buffalo, New York, during the infamous Blizzard of '77, Dudzick's piece (re-)introduces us to Ellen Pazinski, the proud, devout, Polish-Catholic owner of a local tavern, and her four adult children: Eddie (Kevin Maynard), the level-headed Vietnam veteran now making a comfortable living as an illustrator; Annie (Ryan Mosher-Ohr), the hypochondriacal mom forever staving off food cravings; Georgie (Ryan Anderson), the mentally challenged 28-year-old experiencing the first symptoms of dementia; and Rudy (Nicholas Charles Waldbusser), the struggling playwright - and Dudzick surrogate - with a dead-end job and a new baby on the way.

The quintet has reunited to say goodbye both to the soon-to-be-demolished church of the title and the family business (twice-widowed Ellen is preparing a move to Florida), but with the winter storm confining the family to the house and its downstairs bar, the Pazinskis wind up having four days in which to hash out family dilemmas, open old wounds, tease and torment one another in familiar ways, and play the occasional (and hyper-tense) game of Scrabble. And plot-wise, that's about it.



Yet under Simosky's exquisitely elegant and generous direction, this simple setup - *Long Day's Journey Into Night* with wisecracks (and without morphine) - yields a thrilling amount of pleasure. Like the other

Written by Mike Schulz  
Monday, 15 June 2009 06:00

---

works in his trilogy,

*St. Casimir's*

proves Dudzick to be a supremely empathetic storyteller who achieves his effects believably, and who never sacrifices character for the sake of a punchline; the Pazinskis (and, in the first two plays, their spouses and acquaintances) are beautiful because they're *real*

, and the shows' hilarity and heartache stem from them behaving in recognizably aggravated and selfish and loving ways. It's safe to guess, though, that Dudzick's beauty of a script wouldn't have half the impact it does here without Simosky's keen, beautifully perceptive staging, and the obvious adoration she has for both the Pazinskis and those playing them. Her actors don't just sound like a family in

*St. Casimir's*

; they

*feel*

like one.

Perhaps ironically, your strongest awareness of this comes during the bits you're not necessarily meant to be aware of. Watch Georgie's attempt to open a Coke bottle with his mouth, right before Eddie helpfully removes the cap, sticking a straw in the bottle for good measure. Watch Annie and Eddie stare each other down at a bar table, their crooked half-smirks implying, "You hate me ... and *love* hating me, don't you?" Watch Ellen reflexively tussle Georgie's hair, smiling at him with a maternal pride laced with unspeakable sadness. Each moment occurs when the focus of a scene is actually on others, yet these background flourishes are positively invaluable to the production as a whole; as with any tightly knit family, the actors here appear to relate to one another in ways that seem borderline unconscious, so when they relate to or attack one another *directl*  
*y*, the squabbles and grievances carry enormous weight. Simosky is a wizard at pacing and composition - Georgie's surprise appearance in Act II was one of the happiest, most wonderfully choreographed stage shocks I've ever witnessed - but it's her superbly subtle and affectionate hand with actors that's her most inspiring directorial gift.

Fittingly, *St. Casimir's* cast members offer portrayals to merit their director's care. The one performer new to Richmond Hill's Pazinski trilogy is Waldbusser, and this terrifically fine, focused actor assumes the role of Rudy as though he were born into it, masking his character's frustration and impatience with a spectacular comic deadpan. (Dudzick provides Rudy, a chronic joke-teller, with at least two priceless gags per play, and his best one here finds him borrowing Groucho Marx's suggestion that the best way to make ice cubes is to use an onion, as it makes eyes water. Say it out loud.)

Written by Mike Schulz  
Monday, 15 June 2009 06:00

---

In truth, it feels awkward to describe just how excellent Waldbusser is as Rudy, considering that Anderson *played* Rudy - and exceptionally well - in Richmond Hill's *King o' the Moon*. Yet Anderson proves to be an even more wondrous Georgie. His tender, occasionally explosive affability can make you laugh and well up in the same breath, and Anderson pulls off a supremely difficult, heart-stopping few seconds when the young man begins conversing with a long-deceased nun, and you - and his stunned family members - instantly realize how close Georgie is to slipping away completely. It's a magical piece of acting.



Returning to the role he originated in *Over the Tavern* (and played by Chris White in *King o' the Moon*), Maynard again brings a fresh, engaging naturalism to Eddie. Yet as the character has grown in depth over the plays' combined two decades, so has the performer (albeit in one-fourth that time), and Maynard's confidence and quick-witted charm oftentimes give way to a deep-rooted anger and resentment; the scene in which Eddie and Rudy tiptoe around the elder Pazinski's tour in Vietnam is a lovely bit of unforced drama.

Mosher-Ohr, meanwhile, is a giddily, resplendently unforced Annie - as hysterical and effortlessly affecting as she was when she portrayed the role two years ago - and provides lightly gonzo readings and volatile comic breakdowns that inspire one hearty laugh after another. (On Friday, when Annie complained about her aching ankle and Eddie blew her off with "If it was broken, you'd know," Mosher-Ohr brought the house down with her delivery of "How do you know I *don't* know?!")

And the only words to truly capture my feelings toward Rathman, here, are "thank you." This actress might be incapable of falseness on stage, and her fiercely (yet playfully) honest work as Ellen Pazinski is a marvel of frustration, resiliency, and a hard-won relaxedness of spirit; as with many aspects of *St. Casimir's*, you'll likely adore her performance no matter your familiarity with Richmond Hill's previous Pazinski plays, but if you're now seeing Rathman's third take on the role, even the initial sight of her is enough to make you grin.

So thank you, Ms. Rathman. Thank you, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Maynard, Mr. Waldbusser, and Ms. Mosher-Ohr. Thank you, Ms. Simosky. Thank you, Lauren Schroeder and Alexander Hamilton (yup, that's his name), for the brilliantly detailed tavern set. Thank you, Tim Alguire, for the gorgeous lighting and smartly considered '70s song selections. [Thank you for the Four

**Tavern Fever: "The Last Mass at St. Casimir's," at the Richmond Hill Barn Theatre through June 21**

Written by Mike Schulz  
Monday, 15 June 2009 06:00

---

Seasons' "December, 1963 (Oh, What a Night)" - "It ended much too soon" *indeed.*] And while I'm at it, thank you to former Pazinski-saga cast members Jeremy Mahr, Peggy Freeman, Lucas Waller, Miranda Lipes, RJ Pratt, Chris White, Jessica Nicol, Matt Gerard, and Bill Hudson, and all the dedicated behind-the-scenes talents who helped make Richard Hill's Dudzick plays such a joy. I feel *h*  
*onored*  
to have seen them all. I urge you to do your best to at least catch  
*this*  
one.

*For tickets and information, call (309)944-2244 or visit [RHPlayers.com](http://RHPlayers.com) .*