Written by Jill Walsh
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The opening scene of Norm Foster's *Wrong for Each Other* at Geneseo's Richmond Hill Barn Theatre had me worried that I was in for a fluffy, surface-level relationship comedy in which a divorced man and woman reunite after reminiscing about the happiest moments of their shared past. Thankfully, *Wrong* delved under that flimsy comedic surface and let viewers in on the arguments and unfortunate familial circumstances that steered the relationship of Rudy Sorenson (Chris White) and Nora Case (Jessica Nicol White) toward an inevitable separation. And while *Wrong* panders with a predictable ending and plenty of witty banter between the real-life newlyweds, the script felt the most natural, the most *right*, when its characters stopped putting so much effort into entertaining the audience, and focused on each other.

At the play's beginning, Nora and Rudy run into each other at a restaurant three years and nine months after their divorce, and after agreeing to share a meal together, progress through a series of brief flashback scenes that include their initial encounter at a plant shop, their first date at a baseball game, and their first kiss, sexual encounter, and argument. Director Craig Michaels' decision to cast the White duo as the endearing house-painter Rudy and the tough-shelled, workaholic Nora was a clever one. The Whites had such organic conversational and physical chemistry during the opening-night performance that, despite their characters' flaws and infidelities, I was always pulling for Rudy and Nora to end up together.

Nicol White's best moments were when she shed her character's reserved nature and allowed her emotions to control her body language. Her portrayal of Nora's rage while she prepares to leave her marriage was especially affecting; the performer's hands were trembling, and the blood rose in her face as she gestured violently and let her dialogue fly.

Meanwhile, White's interpretation of Rudy succeeded best in his quieter moments, and his final monologue was delivered with genuine, soft-spoken tenderness. Throughout most of the play, though, Rudy was a loud and bumbling guy who stutters in the presence of Nora and offers

clever one-liners as responses, and while White's comedic timing was usually spot-on, his character seemed too eager for audience laughs. (After a long argument about the meaning of the word "signage," with Rudy saying something to the effect of, "Fine, then, I'm going to go get the *car*-age!", I felt as if I should be straining my ears to hear a rimshot.)

Michaels effectively used the theatre-in-the-round space - a square, in Richmond Hill's case - during the apartment scenes. I was always able to see the actor's expressions, and it felt like they had room to move in the space without being hindered by set pieces. Conversely, when the characters were in the tiny plant shop and sitting in the "bleachers" at the baseball game, I was stuck looking at the their backs throughout the duration of both scenes. While I liked the idea of Nicol White and White sitting in the stands with the audience, this would've been better executed if the actors had found seats a few rows up, in the seating section under the theatre's technical booth; more people would've seen them. (And design-wise, it was an interesting choice to paint the plants in the shop white, yet I'm curious to know whether this was made for practical and financial purposes - fresh plants aren't cheap - or merely to symbolize that the scene occurred in the past.)

Foster's *Wrong for Each Other* is a multi-dimensional study of a relationship with unique quirks and universal, relatable qualities. Sure, the script's gender roles - tentative businesswoman meets affable working-class buffoon - were ones that have been portrayed a lot lately (and more crassly) in movies such as *Knocked Up*. But watching this particular couple traverse the rocky terrain toward love and marriage felt pleasantly familiar, rather than tedious.

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