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Port Stanley's 'Harvest' play brilliantly scripted, performed

Posted By Doug Avram

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Brilliant.

In all aspects of the production, it is a brilliant play. The Port Stanley Festival Theatre's production of Ken Cameron's play, "Harvest" is a gem for all to enjoy. It reaches to the audience in so many levels, humour, warmth, likability, a deep understanding of our human condition and real person reaction to a situation an ordinary couple found themselves drawn into.

The play is based on Ken Cameron's parents, Allister and Carolyn Cameron and a situation they found themselves unwittingly involved in. It could happen to you. We find this older couple who want to retire from farming, sell their farm and buy a condo in the city. Times are tough and selling the farm including the farm house proves, as it does in reality, to be a problem. They were able to sell the farm but not the farm house. Solution? Rent the house. Problem? They did not know how to be landlords. Result? They rent their house to a young man who raises a different "crop" and causes immediate problems. For audiences however, a fantastic evening of high entertainment is had with great comedic moments, laughs and smiles galore and even a message or two about life realities.

Cameron's script is brilliantly crafted, funny, witty, and intelligent. He presents his stage characters as Allan and Charlotte and for those of us in the area who are acquainted with Allister and Carolyn, a delightful and honest characterization of two honest and caring people. Terry Barna as Allan and Janet Monid as Charlotte are amazing on stage. They eased into their roles effortlessly which demonstrates how incredibly talented these two actors are. Cameron's script called for a variety of characters that Allan and Charlotte interact with. Director Beth Burck chose to have her actors alternate into the sub-character roles and Barna and Monid moved in and out of the minor characters brilliantly. They entered into the various characters sometimes seemingly finishing a character's sentence which the other had initiated. One scene that had the audience erupt into spontaneous applause after it concluded involved a variety of church ladies - all played by Barna who did it magnificently. Monid and Barna brought all of the characters they played to life, giving each their own special mannerisms, voice and characteristics then reverting seamlessly into their main characters of Allan and Charlotte without ever losing or confusing their characterizations. The interaction and interchange between the play's main characters, Allan and Charlotte is warm, comfortable and so real that it reminds us of ourselves either in our present situation or one that we are working towards in our married life. Barna and Monid displayed a chemistry between them that elevated their acting of the characters into a special sphere. Absolutely brilliant.

The Bill Chesney set design was simple and allowed the audience to visualize the situation for each of the various scenes while the lighting design by Karen Crichton and operation of the lights was excellent. "Harvest" will prove to be one of the PSFT memorable productions. The best way to describe this production is to see it for yourself, you'll be glad you did. Harvest plays until July 18 at the PSFT.

Doug Avram is an Aylmer-based freelance writer

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