

## REVIEW:

### Bad Jews at Lab Theater

Any grandparents reading this? Well, this play was written for us. If you're Jewish, as I am, you'll be doubly involved the whole way through. That doesn't mean you have to be Jewish to enjoy this bright, unique, and noisy real look into real families under the magnifying glass. It's theater I celebrate.

It was a real coup for Annette Trossbach, that dynamic courageous Artistic Director at The Laboratory Theater of Florida, to get rights to this play. It has won New York critics' approval and drawn standing-room only audiences. I urge you to make it happen out on Second Avenue and Woodford, as well.

The play is about three college aged grandkids. Two of them are brothers and the third is a woman cousin. Their parents all have apartments on the same floor up on the Upper West Side and the younger brother has just been given a studio apartment on the same floor. He has a window overlooking the Hudson River. And it's there the arguments begin.

The dialogue is snappy and bright. It turns vicious. The way greed turns vicious.

But, it's funny, uproariously funny. The cast is outstanding. The older brother, Liam, is a familiar face on the Lab Theater stage. He was in the "Reindeer Monologues" and played Mr. Frank in "The Diary of Anne Frank." He is a real pro and perfect in this play. The younger brother, Jonah, is a theater major at FGCU and a necessary contrast to the hysteria of the other two. My biggest kudos go to Stella Ruiz as she sets the stage afire with her outrageous portrayal of the wild, sassy, brassy cousin, Daphna.

Joshua Harmon, the brilliant playwright must surely have had a cousin like Daphna to write those outlandish lines for her. There is wonderful comic relief by the blue eyed and blonde, not Jewish Melody, yes, the Shiksa, played with real insight by Kate Dirrigl, who was also seen in "Reindeer Monologues."

Now, you have to brace yourself for a lot of scathing back and forth yelling and screaming arguments. All because "Poppa said he was giving it to me." You will take sides. And then switch to another side. Finally I wanted to bop them all over the head with a croquet mallet. Stephanie Davis directed the play, and she really knew what she was

doing. There's not a dull spot in it. It builds and rumbles like buffaloes in a ninety minute without intermission stampede. In her director notes Davis says Joshua Harmon's religious grandmother begged him to change the name to "Good Jews," but Harmon stuck to his guns saying the play's mission is to help us decide what's a good Jew and what's a bad Jew. She also quotes Mel Brooks who once said: "The people who had the greatest reason to weep, learned more than anyone else how to laugh."

I promise you a remarkable evening in the theater. Only the smallest minds will have to face their anti-Semitism. Its presence demands that the wisest of us take a wild and nutty opportunity to look into another people's culture. That alone earns my accolades. Go experience it. See what has drawn those audiences to it in New York. It runs only until March 26th. [www. laboratorytheaterflorida.com](http://www.laboratorytheaterflorida.com) Or phone them at 239.218.0481. I'd order fast if I were you. My congratulations on another choice of courageous theater, Ms. Trossbach.

SID SIMON, Sanibel-Captiva Islander