

## THEATER NOTES By Sidney B. Simon

### GO TO THEATER LAB AND SEE “CRIMES OF THE HEART”

Theater Laboratory on Second St. in Downtown Ft. Myers is one of my favorite places to see Live Theater. Artistic Director, Annette Trossbach, has given us some fine and courageous plays year after year. I look back at productions of DEATH OF A SALESMAN, CABARET, THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK, THE LAST NIGHT OF BALLYHOO and BURN THIS to name just a few. The loyalty of wonderful actors who are deeply committed to Community Theater is one of the delights at The Lab. The players all have day-jobs but come to rehearse for a few weeks after work and then deliver powerful plays.

And now, there is their newest “Must See,” Beth Henley’s “CRIMES OF THE HEART.” It only runs with a final matinee until January 21<sup>st</sup>. I urge you to get tickets fast because it is that good and word- of- mouth will lead to sell out performances.

The play won the 1981 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and was nominated for the Tony Award for Best Play. In 1986. It ran on Broadway for two years where it also won the New York Drama Critics Award.

I have seen it at least three times before. I saw Holly Hunter in her Broadway debut. They did it at Smith College one semester, and I so remember taking two pre-teens for whom I got seats in the front row, and they sat there glued in attention to the marvelous shenanigans of this play as it was presented at the Williamstown Theatre Festival in August 2007, directed by Kathleen Turner.

Well, I’m convinced this production at THEATER LAB is every bit as alive and dazzling as any of the above. CRIMES OF THE HEART is about three Sisters and a gossipy, noisy Cousin. They are all quite unlike. They reunite when the youngest of them, Babe, played beautifully by Holly Wilson, has just shot her husband. The plot thickens.

It has a wonderful cast, and the play is shrewdly directed by Paul Graffy. It takes place in Mississippi, but, thank goodness, even Equity actors can’t do Southern Accents.

The oldest sister, Lenny, played skillfully by Lucy Sundby, is stuck with caring for their grandfather and is turning into an old maid. Meg is the fireball wild sister,

and Danielle Channell does her to the hilt as we learn how she tried to make it in Hollywood as a singer/actress. Their reunion has many heart touching moments, but it gets complicated, oh, my does it get complicated. I confess to crying many times that night because it was all performed so well that we were totally involved. The odd ball cousin played by Kayleigh O'Connell was welcome comic relief and wildly over the top. There were two men in the cast, and each added so much to the power and impact of the play. Hats off Marshall Prater and Justin Larsche.

Take a widely recognized prize winning play and give it a cast of devoted Community Theater veterans, directed masterfully, and you get what Theater Lab does best. Brave theater done right. That's why it's a must-see on my list. Call that box office fast. (239) 218.0481. Hurry, you all. Call. Or go to: [www.laboratorytheaterflorida.com](http://www.laboratorytheaterflorida.com)



