

Strange magic, marriage on the rocks make for a loopy night at ‘Sirens’

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Text: T T



Love's a funny thing.

We seek the comfort and stability of marriage, only to wonder after some years where the passion has gone.

In “Sirens” at [Laboratory Theater of Florida](#), Rose ([Brenda Kensler](#)) and Sam ([Patrick Day](#)) have been married for 35 years and, as [BB King](#) sang, “The thrill is gone.”

Novelty and romance have given way to familiarity and predictability. Sam takes his wife for granted. He also fears his best years are behind him, that “every surprise has happened already.”

In addition to a marriage that's turned stale, he's blocked creatively. As a songwriter, he had a big hit 35 years ago with “Rose Adelle,” a song he wrote to woo his not-yet-wife. (And as Rose puts it, it's been covered by [Mel Torme](#) and [Earth, Wind and Fire](#).)

Much to Sam's frustration, nothing he's written since has matched its success .



The siren ([Holly Hagen](#)) sings her song to Sam ([Patrick Day](#)). COURTESY PHOTOS

We first meet Rose and Sam at a travel agency, where they're bickering — their typical form of communication. Leah ([Holly Hagen](#) in one of her multiple roles), an obnoxiously chipper girl fresh out of school, assists them,

and they finally agree to go on a Mediterranean cruise.

This is Ms. Kensler's debut on the LAB Theater stage. She directed previous "Cabaret" and "Calendar Girls" for the company, but it's a revelation to see her on the stage herself. Her Rose is a world-weary, wisecracking New Yorker who doesn't let anything get past her.

(Just the way she says "My ass!" made me laugh.)

Mr. Day is equally as strong as a man smack in the middle of a mid-life crisis. Like an old fool, Sam longs for his high school sweetheart and flirts with young girls on Facebook. He ignores his wife when she's talking to him and ogles a young, scantily clad girl instead.



Long-married Rose (Brenda Kensler) and Sam (Patrick Day) take a Mediterranean cruise in hopes of making thrilling things happen.

Both of them look back at turning points in their lives and wonder: What if ... ? And they come to realize that in marriage, there are many sirens in life that can lure them to danger and dash the relationship against the rocks.

On their cruise, Sam is seduced by the song of a real-life siren (Ms. Hagan again).

Is he dead? Is it a dream? Is he hallucinating?

Ms. Hagen is a siren, yes, but one with a major attitude problem. When Sam tells her, "You're so beautiful it hurts," she snaps, "Yes, that's my thing." Ms. Hagen, who also plays a waitress as snarky as her travel agent character, is extremely adept at playing self-absorbed millennials.

The siren is addicted to playing a hand-held electronic game that washed up on the island. (It's possible she's playing Solitaire, though the script doesn't specify. She refers to it as moving around "little numbered boxes.")

"It's so wonderfully diverting," she coos, her eyes glued to the screen. She's irritated when she has to interrupt

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her play to sing, luring another ship into the rocks.

But Sam is entranced by her song and feels it could be his next big hit — if only he could remember how the melody goes, and if only he could get off that island. Or perhaps he's dead.

"Sirens" just grows more and more delightfully absurd —and difficult to explain without giving too much away.

(Juan Alejandro rounds out the cast, playing the role of [Richard](#), a smarmy sleaze of a guy who says "[Long Island](#)" in what he thinks is a seductive manner.)

One of the great things about [Deborah Zoe Laufer's](#) script is that you have no clue where it's going or what's going to happen next, yet it contains its own strange internal logic.

Director [Anne Dodd](#) does a good job of translating Ms. Laufer's whimsical craziness to the stage, and set designer [Michael Eyth](#) manages to give us at least half a dozen different locales. (Though I confess, for the longest time in the opening scene, I had no clue Rose and Sam were at a travel agency. Perhaps a destination poster or one touting an airline would've helped create a better sense of place.)

Moments between scenes also seem to take too long.

And actors also stepped on each other's lines from time to time, possibly due to opening-night nerves, though some of the overlap inadvertently added a feeling of authenticity to the dialogue.

We actually do get to hear the famous "Rose Adelle" song (music composed by Matt Callaban.) But I was more intrigued by the siren's ethereal singing (music by Siera Condon and FSU music majors, according to the program.)

"Sirens" is packed with surprises and laughs. It's a good reminder that, as Sam says, "You have to make thrilling things happen."

The song's not over, no matter how many verses you've already sung.

Go see "Sirens." You'll be willingly seduced by its lovely loopiness. |

'Sirens'

>> Who: Laboratory Theater of Florida

>> When: Through Aug. 13

>> Where: [1634 Woodford Ave., Fort Myers](#)

>> Cost: \$25 adults, \$12 for students

>> Info: 218-0481 or [laboratorytheaterflorida.com](#)

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