



Opening tonight at Lab Theater in the River District is a charming one-act play called *Sirens* that features an ensemble cast consisting of Patrick Day, Brenda Kensler, Holly Hagan and Juan Alejandro.

Here's the set up: Sam Abrams (Patrick Day) is a 50-something songwriter who hasn't had a hit in 35 years. Sensing that life has passed him by, he's so desperate to regain the glory of yesteryear that



he's taken to social media in a desperate attempt to find a young woman who can rekindle his boyish passion and inspire him one more time. His long-suffering wife, Rose Adelle (played by Brenda Kensler), is not terribly surprised by her husband's emotional infidelity. Sam checked out of their relationship years ago and has become increasingly estranged from her even though they share the



same house and memories. But when he tells her on the Mediterranean cruise they book to celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary that he's met more than one of his 157 female Facebook friends for coffee, she tells him the marriage is over. Sam doesn't argue. He doesn't try to

win her back. In fact, he doesn't really hear her at all. Hearing the seductive song of a siren, he does what any red-blooded, able-bodied man would do. He jumps overboard and follows the music to a tiny



island awash with the skulls and bones of those who came before him.

But unlike his many predecessors, Sam isn't dashed to death on the rocky shores. Much to the dismay of the siren, he's still very much alive, and what ensues is a highly comical exchange in which Sam tries to persuade



her to give him her melody so that he can incorporate it into this next big hit. Played to perfection by 18-year-old Holly Hagan, this siren has no time or patience for Sam. She's recently received a gift from the gods, which she refers to it as "a box with numbers," and she is hopelessly addicted to its solitaire app. And why wouldn't it be? She is confined to an island no bigger than a compact car, has no companionship and her only job is to sing her enchanting tune when boats venture to near her atoll



somewhere in the middle of the Mediterranean sea. "It's so

diverting,” she proclaims, not happy with Sam’s presence or incessant interruptions.

As a theatrical production, *Sirens* touches on a number of the relevant social and interpersonal issues of our day: recapturing lost youth and glory, emotional infidelity, empty nest syndrome and our preoccupation with social media and game apps (okay, perhaps the play would have been better served if our siren had been addicted



to Candy Crush, Farm Heroes Super or Subway Surfer, but given the siren’s confines, playwright Deborah Zoe Laufer can be forgiven for the obvious choice of Solitaire). But *Sirens* is not about ponderous social commentary. It’s, well, diverting. *Sirens* offers us what we need most right now, when our high-def TVs fill our homes and minds with images of military coups, terrorist attacks, mass murders, zombie blue-green algae blooms and two of the most unpopular candidates to ever run for the



presidency. *Sirens* allows us to sit in the dark and be entertained along with our spouse, our friends and complete strangers who, just like us, are willing to suspend belief and eschew reality so that we can be transported back in time to that feeling we enjoyed as children when the gloom of night enveloped our room as mom or dad read us bedtime stories under the pale glow of our nightstand lamp.



“Live theater is one of the last bastions of wonder in our technological world,” says director Anne Dodd. “It is food and balm for the soul.”

Under Dodd’s enlightened direction, this cast shines in a play that is, sorry to say, clichéd, two-dimensional and way too predictable. Brenda Kensler is feisty and touchingly vulnerable as Rose, whose best accomplishment is



the son she hardly ever gets to see. As Sam, Patrick Day connect with the audience on multiple levels – as the creative suffering from writer’s block, as a man mourning his lost youth and the thrill of passion, and as a person contemplating all that might have been as the end of life approaches. And Juan Alejandro is disarming as Rose’s oversexed old high school flame, Richard Miller, who makes his appearance late in the play.



But Hagan is unquestionably the stardust in this play. A temptress, she is sweetly naïve and seemingly unaware of the sexual innuendo and double entendre she uses in

her discourse with shipwrecked Sam. And she handles the changing moods and temperamental and sometimes mercurial siren with a maturity well beyond her years.

“We all need some magic in our lives,” muses director Anne Dodd, and that’s why you will fall in



love with Holly Hagan’s siren. She is pure magic.

So if, like the siren, you find yourself in need of a distraction, Sirens is for you. “It’s so diverting.” You’ll see.

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About the Author



Tom Hall is both an amateur artist and aspiring novelist who writes art quest thrillers. He is in the final stages of completing his debut novel titled "Art Detective," a story that fictionalizes the discovery of the fabled billion-dollar Impressionist collection of Parisian art dealer Josse Bernheim-Jeune, thought by many to have perished during World War II when the collection's hiding place, Castle de Rastignac in southern France, was destroyed by the Wehrmacht in reprisal for attacks made by members of the Resistance operating in the area. A former tax attorney, Tom holds a bachelor's degree as well as both a juris doctorate and masters of laws in taxation from the University of Florida. Tom lives in Estero, Florida with his fiancée, Connie, and their four cats.

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