

# Lab Theater's 'Sirens' is so diverting!



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(Photo: Special to The News-Press)

Never mind the "s" at the end of Lab Theater's new comedy. There's only one actual siren featured in "Sirens."

The mythological creature lives on a secluded island, wrecks ships for fun and can't stop playing her handheld video game.

"It's so *diverting!*" she says absently as her thumbs furiously whack the controls on the Solitaire game.

I felt the same way about this play, too. Directed by Anne Dodd, "Sirens" is smart, funny, heartfelt and deeply diverting.

The show's title doesn't just refer to the mythological ship wrecker, though. It also refers to that siren song we hear as we get into our 50s and 60s — that voice in our heads that tells us our best years are behind us — as well as that desperate yearning we have to recapture our youthful glory days.

It also applies to the lure of past lovers, whose negative traits have been blurred by the passage of time and stand as ideals that could never live up to reality. They're exes for a reason, but sometimes we forget that.

In "Sirens," musician Sam Abrams (played by Patrick Day) feels the pull of a literal siren song — a tantalizing melody that never quite materializes until he jumps ship during a cruise and encounters that Solitaire-loving siren. Sam is famous for writing the hit song "Rose Adelle" for his girlfriend, more than 35 years ago. It's what convinced her to marry him, in fact.

But then the creative well ran dry. "Rose Adelle" was Sam's last and only hit.

Now he and his wife are going on a cruise to "celebrate" their 35th wedding anniversary. There's not much to celebrate, though. She's unhappy, he's dissatisfied and the romantic spark has long since been replaced by bitterness and ennui.

While Rose Adelle fantasizes about her ex-boyfriend, Abrams has been playing Scrabble with women he's met online. And even meeting a few of them for coffee.

As Sam, Day is warm, emotional and angst-ridden, and you can't help but love the guy and hope he finally finds that elusive song. But it's the rest of the cast that get the most laughs here.

Brenda Kensler's Rose Adelle is hilariously caustic and sharp-edged, dismissing much of her husband's statements with a withering "Oh please!" Yet there's a lovable heart beneath all that sarcasm and henpecking, and you realize that, deep down, she still loves this guy.

Juan Alejandro makes the most of his one scene in "Sirens," playing Rose Adelle's old flame Richard Miller — emphasis on OLD. Rose Adelle still sees him as he used to look, four decades ago, but it's obvious that his best days are way, way behind him.

Alejandro plays that geezer vibe to great effect and nearly steals the show in the process. He's hilarious with his pretentious use of Italian phrases and his oozing come-ons to Adelle, promising he'll sweep her away from her drab life and take her to the scenic paradise that is ... *Long Island*.

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Finally, there's the very funny [Holly Hagan](#), who takes on three roles in "Sirens": A travel agent, a waitress and the siren, herself. Out of those three, it's the siren that stands out the most.

Hagan's siren has a cold, inhuman air to her. When Sam — lured by her hypnotic song — jumps from the cruise ship and winds up on the siren's secluded island littered with men's skulls, she's visibly annoyed and looks at him as if he were a bug instead of a man.

"You're still *alive*?" she asks, barely looking away from her precious video game (a "magic box" that washed up onshore).

Hagan's deadpan delivery works beautifully here.

"You're so beautiful!" a dazed Sam tells her.

"Yeah," she says matter-of-factly. "That is my thing."

If you like fun, smart, comedies with just a dash of romance, than "Sirens" should be your thing, too. And, oh yes: It's so diverting.

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