



## Theater review: Message in a massage

In Dr. Givings' house, it's not just the brand-new electrical lamps that are glowing.

So are his female patients.

Exactly why are those patients glowing? The title of Lab Theater's new comedy should give you a clue. It's called "In the Next Room, or The Vibrator Play." And, yes, that's exactly the kind of vibrator we're talking about here: The kind that goes *buzz-buzz* and then gets stored in a bedside drawer.

"In the Next Room" revolves around the medical phenomenon of "female hysteria" in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the now-debunked notion that women's health and emotional problems stemmed from excess fluid in the womb. Some doctors – including the fictional Dr. Givings – used the newly invented electric vibrator to "treat" this condition through the administration of, um, "hysterical paroxysms."

All in the name of science, of course.

The story follows doctor Givings, who administers moan-inducing "electric therapeutic massage" in his New England home. As he treats patient Mrs. Daldry in

the next room, his clueless wife grows more and more suspicious about what's going on in there.

Playwright Sarah Ruhl uses hysteria to explore female empowerment – or a lack of it – in the Victorian age, all with an eye for the sheer absurdity of the whole thing. Female pleasure simply wasn't something polite people cared about or discussed, even between husbands and wives. But once vibrators showed women how liberating orgasms could be, Ruhl suggests, that led to liberation elsewhere in their lives.

Vibrators, in other words, might have hastened women's suffrage and equal rights.

That all sounds very serious and political, but director Lois Kuhne makes sure to play up the laughs inherent in the situation. And there are a lot of laughs here, although they're leavened by occasional dull patches and some uneven acting.

Advertisement

**ORIGINAL HP INKS. GET MORE.**



LEARN MORE AT **HP.COM**



Print Powered By FormatDynamics™



It's fun to watch Timothy Gunderman's expressionless, buttoned-down Dr. Givings as he gives weekly treatments with the vibrator machine.

Givings' patients include Laura Nin in a role that requires her mostly to moan and gasp convincingly (mission accomplished) and a rare male patient in flamboyant artist Leo Irving, played with remarkable flair by Mike Carlip.

But the star of the show is undoubtedly Lucy Harris as the doctor's wife, Catherine Givings. Harris plays Catherine with a babbling kookiness, but she becomes fiercely alive later as the vibrator awakens something new and unexpected in her: an independent, 20th century woman.

There's no nudity or foul language, and all the vibrator action takes place safely under sheets or petticoats. But you will find plenty of moaning, sexual content and subtle sexual innuendo.

"Left to our own devices," indeed.

### If You Go

**What:** "In the Next Room, or The Vibrator Play"

**When:** 8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday until March 24

**Where:** The Laboratory Theater of Florida in Kiwanis Hall, 1634 Woodford Ave., downtown Fort Myers

**Tickets:** \$12-\$20

**Info:** 218-0481 or [laboratorytheaterflorida.com](http://laboratorytheaterflorida.com)

Ads by Pulse 360

AdChoices

### Fort Myers: Mom Makes Botox Doctors Angry

Florida: Mom Reveals Clever \$5 Wrinkle Therapy That Makes Botox Doctors Furious  
[SmartConsumerLiving.com](http://SmartConsumerLiving.com)

### Beware of "flat belly" scams

Here's my story of how I lost 160lbs without fads, boring cardio, or endless crunches.  
[AngelaWebinar.com](http://AngelaWebinar.com)

### President Lowers Amount Homeowners Owe

Homeowners in Florida are using this 1 Program to get a 2.5% Refinance Rate.  
[FinancialInquire.com](http://FinancialInquire.com)

Advertisement

ORIGINAL HP INKS. GET MORE.



LEARN MORE AT [HP.COM](http://HP.COM)



Print Powered By FormatDynamics™