

FEATURES



Jonathan House Emerald

Craig Lucas' play 'Reckless' will be performed at the University's Arena Theatre this weekend as well as March 14-16.

Escaping the Past

■ The University Theatre's latest production puts a new spin on running from the past



'Reckless'
Arena Theatre
★★★★☆

By Lisa Toth
Oregon Daily Emerald

As the merry tunes of "Frosty the Snowman" and clips of the mean, green Grinch and Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer subside, the performance of "Reckless" begins — transporting viewers to a Christmas Eve in the not-so-distant past. The journey may begin on a festive holiday night, but it shortly descends into a personal hell.

The University Theatre's second season presents "Reckless," written by Craig Lucas and directed by Rich Brown, in the Arena Theatre, 104 Villard Hall, at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, as well as March 14 through 16.

Nathan Loveless, played by Tom Fitsimmons, quickly sets the tone when he tells his high-spirited wife, Rachel, "I took a contract out on your life."

From this moment on, "Reckless" keeps the audience waiting to find out what will happen next. Rachel, played by Kirsten Schmieding, is the focus of the story, and the action follows the characters from town to town — each comically named Springfield because there is a town called Springfield in every state. And Rachel's psychosis deepens as the play advances.

The scenes become even more random as Bibles are thrown at the ground, cheesy paintings on bedroom walls continually change and a tinsel Christmas tree made of cast members suddenly appears. The play takes a turn away from the obvious and challenges its viewers until the very last line.

Schmieding as Rachel is bubbly, full of energy and continually evoking laughs from the audience despite the strange and wacky situations in which she finds herself. She questions how well people really know other people and their pasts.

She creatively takes the viewer on a rocky personal journey that blends her insane dreams with the twisted realities of her life. People who have endured rough holiday seasons will find it easy to relate to Rachel, and this production offers a bizarre new spin on running away from the past.

In Rachel's flee for her life on that snowy Christmas Eve, she meets Lloyd Bophtelopti, played by Sam A. Super. Lloyd has also tried to escape his past by changing his name to evade alimony payments and is currently living with a paraplegic named Pooty, played by Jana Schmieding.

"The past is something we wake up to," Lloyd said in Part 1. "It's the nightmare we wake up to every day."

In the role of Pooty, Jana Schmieding effectively plays a serious woman who pretends to be deaf and disabled, hiding secrets from Lloyd in the process to protect their love for each other.

This play strays from the beaten path not only in Lucas' fragmented and disturbing views on American life, but in the fact that the viewers' expectations constantly change as the play progresses.

Multiple Christmas Eves, Springfields and psychiatrists all factor into Rachel's crazy life. In each Springfield, she sees a new psychiatrist, each played by Minnie Goode. Goode is fabulous in her versatile ability to play Rachel's psychiatrist over and over again, each time with a different accent, manner and costume. Her intense anger-release therapy methods left me grinning from ear to ear.

This play takes a more serious tone in Part 2, and Rachel must confront the question as to whether the events that have occurred in her life happened for a reason.

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