



Clockwise from lower left: Maddy (Elaine Slatore), Sid (Davis Smith) and Darcy (Bob Glasser)

Must Go On

New script, iffy acting at Cottage Theatre

Darrell (Bob Glasser) is a successful actor when suddenly it's lights out — quite literally. A stage light falls on him, leaving him dependent on his wife and daughter. His trauma is also accompanied by a quirk: Darrell can only speak lines from plays, movies, television shows and songs.

Cottage Theater presents *First Impressions*, an original "dramedy" by regulars Jim Curtiss and David C. Work Sr. According to the directors' note, the concept began while Curtiss and Work were performing in the 2006 Cottage production of *Sound of Music*. They cooked up Darrell and asked what kind of "first impressions" he would make on others.

On the surface, the concept lends itself to misplaced outbursts for comedic effect. However, it is clear that the authors wanted to do more than create a laugh riot. Darrell's dialogue is neither random nor nonsensical and has been well-crafted to fit the show coherently. Glasser gives the most convincing performance of the night when reciting Darrell's various monologues

and otherwise remaining in haze while his family argues around him.

Darrell's wife Maddy (Elaine Slatore) and daughter Lisa (Caroline Cramer) struggle to live life with the burden of Darrell squashing their options. Lisa is afraid to bring her boyfriend Mark (Ron Judd) home for fear that Darrell will scare him away. Maddy is too overcome with her own guilt to put

forward and twisting her hands together constantly, which comes across as amateurish and repetitive. Slatore has trouble varying Maddy's voice, and many of her cues come too late, making otherwise powerful moments seem insincere by way of delayed reaction. The show also lacks decisive blocking, which leaves actors moving for movement's sake and uncomfortable in any type of physical embrace. This is most problematic when characters are forced to hug or kiss and discredits what is supposed to be an ongoing relationship between the characters Mark and Lisa.

The script itself is well done, but it could definitely use red ink through a few sections — as is to be expected from its first run. Lisa repeats nearly the same three lines in three scenes to tell us Darrell is ruining her life. The first act also drags with most of the deep realizations coming by way of overly emotional monologues or one-sided phone conversations.

Had the repetitive moments of the first act been cut, the second act may have had more time to flourish. The second act is definitely the stronger portion of the show with character switches between Darrell and his brother Sid (Davis N. Smith) providing some of the stronger moments in the piece. However, plot points smash together to create a timely conclusion. Though this works for farce and is done quite nicely, it seems a bit displaced when preceded by the drama of

unnecessary role, providing nothing to the plot but confusion at her presence.

All that said, the endeavor has a strong base and could be a very solid piece with another look at the writing. The audience seemed to enjoy it, and the show certainly got good laughs. *First Impressions* makes an impact, and it could make an even greater one if given another chance to hit the stage. Curtiss and Work have given the theater a nice script that deserves another go-round. **EW**

First Impressions runs through March 8 at Cottage Theatre in Cottage Grove. Tix available at www.cottagetheatre.org or 942-8001.

Opening Nights

Flight of the Lawnchair Man
Opens Friday, March 7, at
Actors Cabaret of Eugene.

Up, up and away goes the new musical *Flight of the Lawnchair Man*. Jerry Gorman (Christopher Sutton) just wants to fly, but a slight case of dyslexia and lack of a pilot's license make doing so slightly impossible. That is, until he straps himself into a lawnchair with 400 helium-filled balloons and up he goes 16,000 feet into the air. While his fellow Wal-Mart employees and mother think he's crazy, his girlfriend Gracie (Donna Lynne Champlin) supports his high-flying dreams. The whimsy of this new musical is a reminder that anyone can soar, no matter how out of reach their hopes may seem.

Show dates are March 7-8, 14-15, 21-22 & 28-29. Tix available at 683-4368.

The authors wanted to do more than create a laugh riot.

Darrell in a "home" and seems trapped by her love for the man.

Though conceptually strong, *First Impressions* is not without problems and becomes overshadowed by mediocre acting. Caroline Cramer gives Lisa a pre-teen angst and tends to convey emotion by jutting

Act I. The show also could end at least once before it actually does, and a couple of the characters seem out of place. Mark's brother Michael (David Work Jr.) is only important to the plot in his concept and need not ever appear onstage, especially when saved for the final scene. Julia (Alli Cramer) is an

we like to party.

thirteenth and oak | downtown eugene
visit myspace.com/indigodistrict for more details.

ADVERTISERS SPEAK

Sound Marketing Not Gambling



"As a new business I worry about the success of my advertising. It can seem hard to identify the results when spending money with different magazines and newspapers. I will say that I was quite surprised with the phone calls and drop ins I got. Folks specifically stating they saw our ad in EW. Now I know first hand about the impact EW can have on my business. I know EW did their job in getting people through my door."

-Tuan Bui, Owner
The Astoria Bar and Poker Room

No matter what size your business is today, call us for an
advertising plan to get you where you want to be tomorrow.
Call 484-0519 or visit us at www.eugeneweekly.com