

Jay Hash (left), Sydney Behrends and James Lee in *Three Days of Rain*



Generation Gap

Three Days of Rain will make you call your parents

None of us like to imagine our parents having sex. In fact, none of us spend that much time imagining our parents at all — at least not as living, breathing, thinking individuals with a rich and intricate past. The reasons for this are emotionally deep and psychologically complex: Mom and Dad have always been larger than existence, immense figures who gave us life, who provided for and punished us, loved or neglected us, took us in or turned us away. They are more myth than reality. When we try to picture our parents with ordinary daily lives like our own — infinitely detailed, full of trial and error, joy, ugliness, love, betrayal, boredom, struggle, sex — it's difficult to think beyond generalities (calling them parental units, for example), especially when we wonder what they might have been like before we came along.

Three Days of Rain, a play by Richard Greenberg currently in production at Very Little Theatre, takes this mystery of the generations and pushes it to its ultimate dramatic limits. The results are hilarious and disturbing and always surprising. The story opens in 1995, in the Manhattan apartment held in perpetuity by famous architect Ned Janeway, who has just died. Three adults arriving in town to attend the funeral converge on the apartment: Ned's son Walker (Jay Hash), a hyperactive, hyper-intelligent wastrel; his sister Nan (Sydney Behrends), the responsible one; and the hunky TV actor Pip (James Lee), son of Ned Janeway's partner Theo. Through a series of conversations, crises and revelations,

these three — while reliving the turmoil of their own youth — are forced to recreate something they can only guess at: What were their parents really like, and what happened among them?

The second act stays in place but leaps back in time, to 1960, where Ned (Hash) and Theo (Lee) use the stark apartment as a base for their new architecture firm. Enter Lina (Behrends), Theo's girlfriend, a whipsmart Southerner right out of Tennessee Williams who lusts to "be known" among New York's intelligentsia. This is an emotional triangle if there ever was one. Complications of a sexual and professional and spiritual nature ensue, scrambling everything we thought we knew and revealing how completely (and significantly) wrong were the conclusions drawn by their children in the first act.

Though it takes a bit of dancing and darting around to find its way, *Three Days of Rain* in the end proves to be one of those rare treasures: a small, intimate play that tackles some pretty profound ideas without once losing the subtle rhythms and stumbling uncertainties of family life. Director Sarah Etherton reveals a fine understanding of the material; her pacing is admirably unhurried, yet she maintains all the suspense and intensity of a murder mystery. And the three actors, each of whom takes on dual roles, are delightful to watch — they create a believable sibling dynamic that crackles with tension and desire. **EW**

Three Days of Rain plays through May 1 at The Very Little Theatre; \$10, tickets at www.thevlt.com or 344-7751.

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