

Good Times Home > A&E > Theater > Chills in 'Change'

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Round two of Cabrillo's hit still sizzles

It is no wonder that audience popular demand brings this uplifting glance at the human "relationship" back to the Cabrillo Stage for a second season. "I Love you, You're Perfect ... Now Change," sparked mirth from curtain to close on opening night, June 18. The dynamic cast of four—Max Bennett-Parker, Nicolas Ceglio, Sarah Stein and Ariel Buck — carried out roles that ranged radically in age and complexity. The small cast tackled more than 40 different parts altogether in the two-hour outing, ranging from awkward twentysomething daters, to an elderly couple that meets at a funeral. So, it's official—this show is still a hit.

This, in part, has much to do with the play's comedic nature, which allows it to tackle issues as sensitive as aging

and death, while providing the appropriate dose of relief to make it an elevating peek at life. From the early-on, sardonic portrayal of the notorious "first date" experience to the depiction of a mellowed but sturdy love between an elderly couple reading the morning paper, "I Love You ..." works as a series of vignettes that depict raw moments. Each vignette sets out with a specific prototype in mind, be it the desperate girl who waits by her phone, or the young father whose friends refuse to hang out with him because he uses words like, "doo-doo" in average conversation.

Well choreographed and directed by Andrew Ceglio, the play effectively exposes the insecurities that every person faces in the name of Cupid. Audience members, be they 20-year-old girls on a night out or 80-year-old couples, find themselves shaking their heads, chuckling aloud and smiling, all the while noting, "that's too true!"

Watching "I Love You ..." provides a reminder of the vitality and perseverance of life and living, despite loss and hardships. The cast is tight knit and the vocal abilities here are remarkable. The four voices blend into near-perfect harmonic crescendos. Monologue songs are strong for the most part, though slightly slow moving during the more mushy numbers. The female half of the cast stands out especially—at times, their vocal capabilities are downright remarkable. Take note of Stein's comedic style, which echoes faintly but distinctly the essence of Tina Fey.

The live orchestra, which rests in the corner of the floor-level theater, shines under the musical direction of Drew Lewis—you'll marvel at the impressive techniques of the jovial pianist, cellist and violinist, who offer perfect musical timing, especially during some of the show's comedic parts—their moments of wit during set changes keep things flowing nicely.

But everything about "I Love You ..." flows. The cast and crew work nicely in tandem—a good thing, especially for a play that takes an ironic and humorous glance at some of the madness found in relationships. Better still, the show manages to effectively do several key things well: visualize the unwavering ability of humans to overreact and complicate their relationships, and showcase just how hungry we all are to experience the unmatched joys that can come from real intimacy.

"I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change ..." plays at Cabrillo Stage through July 3. Visit cabrillostage.com or call 479-6154. Send comments on this article to letters@gtweekly.com

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