

Pocatello - Theatre Review

A review by Suzanne Birrell.



Mark L. Taylor, Justin Okin, Eden Brolin, Jen Pollono, Trevor Peterson, and Tracie Lockwood. Photos by John Perrin Flynn

The Rogue Machine celebrated their new space at the Met with the west coast premiere of Samuel D. Hunter's *Pocatello*. A wonderfully generic Italian restaurant designed by Stephanie Kerley Schwartz provides the setting for the timely play about the soul of America. With corporations such as Starbucks, Best Buy and Appleby's pushing out the family businesses, small town America is just becoming variation of a theme as names become meaningless.

The characters in *Pocatello* each has their own defense. Moot to the story is the death by suicide of a man who lost his business. His son Nick- don't call him Nicky-(played by Rob Nagle) leaves town and never looks back. With a fragile core, he has only returned at the request of his brother Eddie (played by Matthew Elkins) and encouragement from his wife Kelly (played by Rebeca Larsen) who seems to be the only person not emotionally charged with all the changes. Anne Gee Byrd plays Doris - "Don't call me Mom"- mother of Eddie and Nick, doesn't accept that anything is wrong at all until she confesses she feels that she is the reason that Eddie is gay.



Justin Okin plays Troy, a waiter who once had a better job which moved overseas and now struggles to make ends meet at the restaurant. He doesn't want to leave his home. His daughter Becky- "Don't call me Becky, Americans don't deserve names" played by Eden Brolin, is openly angry at the status quo, the restaurant, her parents but is marvelously gentle and kind when dealing with her senile grandfather (Mark L. Taylor. Troy's alcoholic wife Tammy (played by Tracie Lockwood) articulates the desperation she feels. "There are plenty of unhappy people in the world. Why should we be the ones who get to be happy."

Rounding out the family is the waiter Max (played by Trevor Peterson) who provides comic relief all around with his go with the flow attitude, and waitress Isabelle played by Jen Pollono who provides a running sardonic commentary.

Through it all Eddie is desperately missing the normalcy of just being able to sit and talk like a family. In his desperate efforts to regain that simple connection he makes mistake after mistake which fuels the drama. He is the one who refuses to let go of the good in the past and tries to hold all his families together. With a heartbreaking smile on his face, we know that he will fail. "We're not going to be the persons we wanted to be" one of the characters tell him as all the characters loose touch with their homes.



Jen Pollono, Rebecca Larsen, Anne Gee Byrd, Matthew Elkins, and Rob Nagle

The very talented ensemble is brilliantly directed by John Perrin Flynn. The entire production team is to be congratulated on a beautifully produced show.

Pocatello is a perfect play. With a balance of comedy and drama it makes us think and question. It touches our life. The world is changing so fast do any of us know where we are from anymore? At the end of the play, curmudgeon Doris seemingly totally out of character starts talking about people in the town. She mentions that she knows a man like Eddie and that maybe she could introduce them. Eddie's smile is still on his face and slowly we realize that he is crying tears of joy. This is a connection with the past that he has been longing for, simple conversation about simple things with his mom.

Pocatello is a wonderful journey. Bring a tissue. This is a must see for all - especially those who can't go home because where they are from no longer exists.

Pocatello is running thru April 10. Don't miss this one!

The Rogue Machine @ The Met

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Reservations 855-585-5185 or <http://roguemachinetheatre.com/>



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