

ARTS & CULTURE

THEATER REVIEW: World premiere of “Rest” at South Coast Rep

JEAN LOWERISON - SDGLN THEATER CRITIC
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In “The Whale,” Samuel D. Hunter’s best-known play, an online English teacher is quietly eating himself to death in his apartment.

In his latest, “Rest,” the locale shifts to a retirement home, where the problem is another thief of vitality and the life force: Alzheimer’s. The world premiere of “Rest” plays through April 27 at South Coast Repertory in Costa Mesa.

Pine Manor Assisted Living, in northern Idaho, is down to three residents and will soon close. Only three staffers remain, and the cook has just been replaced (for the final three days) with young and extremely religious college student Ken (Wyatt Fenner), who thinks the experience will be “good for me.”

Now a big storm is brewing, and manager Jeremy (Rob Nagle) is battering down the hatches when he realizes that 91-year-old Alzheimer’s victim Gerald has disappeared. Going outside to look is suicidal; soon the radio reports that even the highway is closed and there’s nothing left to do but wait, keep an eye out for Gerald and hope for the best.

Ken and Jeremy, together with Gerald’s wife Etta (Lynn Milgrim), third resident Tom (Hal Landon, Jr.) and nurses Ginny (Libby West) and Faye (Sue Cremin), gather in the rundown lobby to wait out the storm.

Etta’s immediate instinct is to find that squirreled-away bottle of port. But as often happens when people are trapped, their issues come to the fore. In this group, the Gerald problem is compounded by others such as faith, pregnancy and loss, and we as eavesdroppers get something to think about on the way home.

Hunter is at his most original with misfits; this group is more ordinary (normal, if you will), and though they can seem stereotypical, the script is good enough to keep you interested in what happens next. Martin Benson’s fine direction and this fine cast are especially aided by Michael Roth’s soundscape, including his original music.

Hunter offers amusement, familiar characters and food for thought in “Rest.”

The details

The world premiere of “Rest” plays through April 27 at South Coast Repertory, 655 Town Center Drive, Costa Mesa.

Tuesday, Wednesday and Sunday at 7:30 pm; Thursday through Saturday at 8 pm; matinees Saturday and Sunday at 2:30 pm.

[ENLARGE](#)



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Lynn Milgrim and Sue Cremin in South Coast Repertory’s world premiere of “Rest” by Samuel D. Hunter.