

October 4, 2017:

Stupid Kid reviewed by Rob Stevens



Joe Hart, Taylor Gilbert, Rob Nagle, Allison Blaize and Ben Theobald (all photos by Brian Cole)

Playwright Sharr White and actress Taylor Gilbert proved to be a winning pair in The Road Theatre Company's 2015 production of *The Other Place*. They have joined together again for The Road's current World Premiere of the playwright's *Stupid Kid*. Gilbert's Gigi in the current play is worlds apart from the dementia plagued Juliana of Cape Cod in the previous play. Gigi is a slovenly wife given to bouts of depression and thoughts of suicide in a small town on the plains of eastern Colorado. She and her husband Eddie (Joe Hart) are an impoverished and grief stricken couple under the thumb of her despotic brother Mike (Rob Nagle), a former sheriff turned State Representative turned judicial candidate. You might be inclined to call them trailer trash (thanks to Jeff McLaughlin's detailed scenic design) but you would be insulting people who choose to live in trailers. Joe used to own a car repair garage and Gigi worked double shifts at the chicken processing plant in town. Fourteen years ago Gigi discovered the body of a young girl buried in her backyard. It was after her teenaged son Chick (Ben Theobald) confessed to the crime and was sentenced to 500 years in prison that life fell apart for the family. But Chick has just been released from prison because of new DNA evidence and is at his parents' door even though he hasn't seen or heard from them for the past 14 years. Unclemike shows up soon with lots of foodstuffs and Hazel (Allison Blaize), a young prisoner he's using as a sexual punching bag. It seems Chick may be in for a big payday from the state because of his wrongful imprisonment or he may be facing a re-trial. Unclemike is willing to help Chick and his parents obtain the money but for a price.

This family will never be the same, no matter if they are rich or poor, guilty or innocent. White's writing slowly pulls you into the orbit of this extremely dysfunctional family, keeping you off balance in your expectations until finally hitting you with a powerful emotional catharsis. Cameron Watson's laser focused direction keeps his cast solidly in their characters and moves the action along through the quiet as well as the tempestuous moments. Gilbert is once again astounding in her characterization of Gigi, a woman who long ago abandoned her emotional attachments to her loved ones. Hart is her match as her pill-popping sometimes superhero husband. Theobald gives strong support as Chick while Michelle Gillette as busybody neighbor Franny provides some much needed comedy relief. If you enjoy great writing and acting you would be stupid to miss *Stupid Kid*.



Ben Theobald, Taylor Gilbert and Joe Hart