

Pocatello Review - Do Good Guys Finish Last?

By Elaine L. Mura

A play about the ever-expanding corporatization of America, POCATELLO takes place in a sadly shrinking city in Idaho. With poetic precision, playwright Samuel D. Hunter gradually dissects the families in the play and the shifting community dynamics in which they live – revealing long-kept secrets and memories that most would prefer to forget. The playwright knows how to uncover the humor that can often be found in pathos.



Cast of Pocatello - Photo by John Perrin Flynn

Eddie manages one of the last family dining chains in Pocatello, a nationwide Italian restaurant franchise with table service, struggling to survive in a fast-food-cluttered town. He works hard to placate his two families – one his mother, brother, and sister-in-law and the other his restaurant family of waitresses and waiters. Upper management has sent down the word: the Pocatello branch will be closed in the next few weeks.



Matthew Elkins and Anne Gee Byrd - Photo by John Perrin Flynn

Eddie (Matthew Elkins) begins the dance of doom as he tries to keep the business open by shoveling his own savings into the till while hiding the truth from his employees. Add to this the stress of his oddly distancing and often belligerent relatives (Anne Gee Byrd, Rob Nagle, Rebecca Larson) who resist all his pathetic and soulful efforts to entice them into becoming a more involved and caring family. Desperate for the semblance of a loving family, Eddie is nevertheless met by failure and despair.



Tracie Lockwood, Eden Brolin, and Justin Okin - Photo by John Perrin Flynn

At the same time, Troy (Justin Okin), a waiter in the restaurant for eight years, is now forced to deal with a father (Mark L. Taylor) slowly sinking into dementia. His wife (Tracie Lockwood) is depressed and overwhelmed, and his bright adolescent daughter (Eden Brolin) has become destructive. All the while his job hangs by a thread. And then there are his relationships with the other restaurant employees, including sullen Isabelle (Melissa Paladino) and pothead Max (Trevor Peterson). And merrily we roll along...

POCATELLO is the Rogue Machine's first play in a new venue, the Met Theatre, and carries on the Rogue Machine's reputation for presenting excellent intimate theater. Scenic designer Stephanie Kerley Schwartz's staging is effective. Ric Zimmerman's lighting and Christopher Moscatiello's sound add to the overall integrity of the production. Director John Perrin Flynn has accomplished the delicate goal of keeping the action moving while at the same time maintaining the counterpoint of frustration and unexpressed yearnings just beneath the surface. Although at times slow-moving, POCATELLO arrives at its goal of presenting a slice of today's Americana with care and precision.

POCATELLO runs through April 10, 2016, with performances at 8:30 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and at 3 p.m. on Sundays. The Met Theatre is located at 1089 N. Oxford Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90029. Tickets are \$34.99. For reservations, call 855-585-5185 or go online at www.roguemachinetheater.com.