



Out & About

Experimental British play explores data overload

Recovery Lounge presents 'Love and Information'

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PHOTO PROVIDEDOlivia Zeis and Lucky Cerruti rehearse a scene from "Love and Information."

By ROBIN CAUDELL Press-Republican | Posted 2 months ago

UPPER JAY — Director/actor James Coleman makes his Recovery Lounge directorial debut

in Caryl Churchill's "Love and Information" staged Dec. 2 through 6 in Upper Jay.



"I recently directed it at a school I taught," said Coleman, who lives in Whallonsburg.

"It's a wonderful way for actors to stretch themselves in a variety of characters. I also felt it was a good opportunity to meet actors in the area."

Coleman was impressed with director Scott Renderer's productions and the talent he saw in them.

NOT TRADITIONAL

Coleman has been coming up to the Adirondacks since 1982 when he was hired to mount shows at Santa's Workshop until he stopped in 2000.

But his legacy lives on at the Wilmington amusement park, where they still stage his shows. He was also active with the Depot Theater in Westport and the Essex Theatre Company.

"I just recently retired from living in New York City for 35 years," he said.

"I retired upstate. I was looking for a lively theatrical enterprise to connect to. I thought it would be the Recovery Lounge and that is working out."

He chose "Love and Information" because of his interest in actors and working closely with them.

The full-length play has 50 scenes and is quite experimental in nature, though it has dramatic, romantic and comedic overtones.

"It's not a traditional story play," Coleman said. "It's all these different scenes. Some are five lines long. Some are five pages long. All of them are about people and individuals, who are striving to make an intimate connection, reach out and touch somebody. What you find out, the management of 21st century information is thwarting that."

The heart-to-heart blockage is not solely from electronic devices.

"But also family information," Coleman said.

"Our families are so complex in the 21st century, our society, our cultures ... How do you even do this anymore? It's not just electronic but all kinds of human information that we manage on a daily basis now."

AUDITIONS

His casting call was cloaked in a series of “Meet the Director” evenings.

“It was in fact an audition because we didn’t want to intimidate anyone,” he said. “I asked people to read scenes from the play. Out of those evenings, I ended up having 15 actors who were interested in being in the play. Because I needed another man I put myself in five scenes. It’s a nice, wonderful, large group of talent.”

The play stars Olivia Zeis, Casey Galligan, Zoe Brammer, Maeve Brammer, Liza Amirault, Lucky Cerutti, Dylan Duffy, Betsey Thomas-Train, Marie-Anne Azar Ward, Susan Doolittle, Joy McCabe, James Coleman, Peg Wilson, Dorian Gossy, Theresa Cheetham-Palen and Roger Mitchell.

Several vignettes — interiors and exteriors — have been created within the Recovery Lounge.

“When you pick up the play and read the play, you read the scene,” Coleman said.

“The scene has a one-word or two-word title. Then, there is dialogue that is spoken in the scene. There are no characterizations or settings indicated. What you get is dialogue. That puts you in a situation with actors where you have to evolve characters simply with the words they speak. This is really engaging in rehearsal. It’s very stimulating creatively to begin to wonder who are these voices? What is the relationship that is suggested here? Where are we?”

RANGE OF ACTORS

In rehearsals, the actors’ processes worked through these questions.

“It’s a kind of Rubik’s cube,” he said. “It gives you a little bit of information but doesn’t give you everything. It’s almost like a parade of humanity goes through the play but by the end of it, you can see how all of us struggle to keep our lives together while we have human interactions.”

Every actor portrays between four and eight different characters.

“They love it,” Coleman said. “Every actor is in about 10 different scenes in the play. We’re all having a great time. It’s been a very enjoyable experience for the actors and for me getting acquainted and being imaginative together.”

The actors range in age from a teen to an 80-year-old man.

“We have some genuine amateurs,” Coleman said. “We also have actors who work regularly that have performed at Pendragon, at Lake Placid Center for the Arts, trained actors who live in the area. I have the entire range — people have been in one play before and people who regularly work as actors and who are quite skilled. I’m quite happy with all the skills these actors bring to rehearsals.”

Churchill is British, a woman and is one of the world’s foremost living playwrights.

“I used to teach at an all-girls school in Manhattan,” Coleman said. “A lot of my professional

life was working with young women and girls in drama,” he said.

“It’s interesting to have a large cast, which the majority of them are women.”

Coleman is the first of several guest directors Renderer will bring to the Recovery Lounge to share their talent and ideas.

“I’ve come a long way since Santa’s Workshop,” Coleman said.

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IF YOU GO

WHAT: "Love and Information," a play by Caryl Churchill and directed by James Coleman.

WHEN: 8 p.m. Dec. 2 through 6.

ADMISSION: \$18 at the door. Now taking reservations (strongly suggested).

PHONE: 946-8315.

EMAIL: upperjayartcenter@gmail.com.

Author

Robin Caudell



Robin Caudell was born and raised on Maryland's Eastern Shore. She holds a BS in Journalism from the University of Maryland, College Park and a MFA in Creative Writing from Goddard College. She has worked at the Press-Republican since 1990

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