

new leaf



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Reckless by Craig Lucas
Directed by Brandon Ray

REVIEWS

Chicago Reader, October 24, 2003

Director Brandon Ray does a marvelous job with Craig Lucas's fast-paced, morbid comedy. Bubbly chatterbox housewife Rachel plunges into the snow wearing her bathrobe and slippers on Christmas Eve. She leaves home in a hurry when she learns her husband has hired a hit man to bump her off. An overcompensating altruist with the unlikely name of Lloyd Bophtelophiti Bill Hyland brings Rachel home to live with him and his paraplegic wife, Pooty Marsha Harman.

Like the films *After Hours* and *Something Wild*, this is an existential road trip made into a film in 1995. As significant events continue to occur on Christmas Eve, Rachel moves from Springfield to Springfield - there's one in every state - and shrink to shrink. Yet *Reckless* is also upbeat: anything can happen in this unfathomable universe. Like a contemporary *Candide*, Rachel leaves mayhem - and a pile of dead bodies - in her ditzy wake yet rationalizes that everything must happen for a reason. The play takes a dive only when, for a bleak period in the second act, hope is lost.

Erin Shelton is a loopy powerhouse in the leading role, while John Prakash gets the smarminess award for his portrayals of several characters. Sound designer Nick Keenan has made excellent choices in music.

- Rebecca L. Ford

Centerstage.com, October, 2003

Reckless is a tricky undertaking for a theatre company due to its many locations and challenging acting roles. Thankfully, New Leaf Theatre's production, under the direction of Brandon Ray, is quite good. New Leaf Theatre, still relatively new to the Chicago theatre scene, is one of those companies that are able to make the most of their scant resources. The resident theatre company of the Lincoln Park Cultural Center across from the zoo, New Leaf Theatre performs in a very small space, but, as evidenced by their current production of *Reckless*, they strive to produce quality work nonetheless.

Brandon Ray has handled the potential pitfalls of *Reckless* very well. He manages to keep the play's absurdity and still keep it quite real. As a result, the play's final scene is quite effective. The acting is quite solid as well. Bill Hyland gives a solid performance as the mysterious Lloyd, as does Marsha Harman as his wife Pooty and Christian Heep as Tom/Tom Jr. John Prakash and Catherina Kusch give very detailed performances in their multiple roles.

Reckless is anchored, however, by a terrific performance by Erin Shelton as Rachel. Her Rachel is eternally idealistic until her unavoidable breakdown, and when she hits bottom, she falls all the way. New Leaf was lucky to find her.

This production of *Reckless* has only one more weekend to go, so hurry over to Lincoln Park to catch this production. Good things are in store for New Leaf, and you should catch them on the way up.

- Bill Gorman

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