

In 'Ripcord,' two widows find friendship in adversaries

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What constitutes a friendship, and out of what circumstances is a friendship forged? In David Lindsay-Abaire's comedy "Ripcord," two widowed "Odd Couple"-like women wage war over a room at their senior living facility but end up winning something far more meaningful than the spoils of a bet.



In The Public Theatre performance, Abby Binder (Cecelia Riddett) and Marilyn Dunne (Maura O'Brien) are mismatched roommates who couldn't be more different. Abby's past has left her bitter and anti-social. Marilyn is an incessant chatterbox who always looks at the positive. When management won't forcibly remove Marilyn from the room, Abby decides to strike a bet with her ultra-competitive roommate. If Abby makes Marilyn mad, Marilyn will move to another room, but if Marilyn scares Abby, she gets Abby's coveted window view.

"Ripcord" is a comic commentary on life in the golden years. The play is laced with witty repartee as the two women "prank" each other, willing to do whatever it takes to be victorious. The gags in the play aren't necessarily unexpected, but they are well set up, offering plenty of laughs and knowing smiles. As Abby and Marilyn's mischief becomes more elaborate, secrets are uncovered, revealing underlying issues of abuse and familial estrangement.

O'Brien and Riddett are a delight as the adversarial roommates. O'Brien brings a girlish glee to the production as Marilyn, while Riddett, as Abby, is amusingly caustic, with fragile undertones. Riddett offers one of the plays touching moments, longingly holding a ghost baby at a haunted house.

The haunted house, with ghosts and a demonic clown (Rob Cameron), is just one of the wacky situations that the roommates find themselves in. Madness ensues as Marilyn enlists her daughter Colleen (Heather Dilly), son-in-law Derek (Torsten Hillhouse) and son Lewis (Cameron), to assist in the more outrageous of the fear-inducing stunts. Colleen and Lewis, who own the family skydive business, share their mother's adventurous zest for life. Cameron doubles as Abby's estranged son, Benjamin, offering an intense and emotional performance that gives insight into Abby's life.

Mike Anthony completes the cast as Scotty, an orderly at the Bristol Place Senior Living Facility, giving a spirited performance that brings both sincerity and humor. The audience laughed Friday as Scotty and Marilyn found themselves in a suggestive-sounding situation after one of Marilyn's failed pranks.

"Ripcord" offers plenty of amusing moments as Abby and Marilyn square off, battle lines firmly drawn. No matter what the roommates throw at each other, they bounce back, forging a bond of friendship that transcends their differences.

WHAT: "Ripcord" at The Public Theatre – May 5 through May 14, 2017

WHERE: 31 Maple St, Lewiston

HOW MUCH: \$20 adults, \$5 ages 18 and under

MORE INFO: 782-3200, thepublictheatre.org