

Progressive Area Theater Troupe Challenges With Season of Timely, Compelling Productions

Newtown, Pennsylvania – The Langhorne Players Theatre Company, building on more than a half century of progressive theater, once again offers some truly compelling fare for those Delaware Valley patrons seeking a more edgy live performance experience. Having just completed the run of this season's first show—*Laundry & Bourbon, Lone Star*, a quirky comedy laced with deep insights and sometimes disturbing glimpses of dark reality—the Langhorne Players are currently in rehearsal for their next production.

Lobby Hero, by playwright Kenneth Lonergan, is the second in a series of five productions planned for this season. Billed as “a smart, funny look at slow learners in a fast world,” *Lobby Hero* is a sly wink of a play, exploring with comedy, drama and romance the effects of a world whose moral ground has become shifting sand. It's the story of Jeff, a goofy, luckless ex-sailor who retreats from his failures to what he believes is the sanctuary of an apartment lobby. It doesn't take long for him and the audience to discover that he instead has plunged himself into the midst of more action and pathos than he ever bargained for.

The cast members deftly draw four convincing characters whose attempts at negotiating illicit liaisons, abuse of power and the intrigue of a local murder investigation reveal their all-too-human flaws. The fast-paced script pulls the audience along on the bumpy ride to an ending that will have them examining their own stance on morals and ethics. The parallels of the script with today's very real ethical scandals at every level of business, government and even service organizations throws our modern moral schizophrenia into high relief, which couldn't please director Curt Herr more.

“First and foremost, it has to be a good play,” he says, explaining the Langhorne Players' criteria for choosing the shows they'll produce. “There has to be more content than plot, with strong characters and vibrant, contemporary writing. Most important, the story must be compelling, whether in an endearing or disturbing way. We really consider ourselves to be the turn-off-your-TV-and-turn-on-your-brain entertainment choice.”

Herr says *Lobby Hero* fits the bill with “really funny but thought-provoking writing, which brings up a lot of good issues without beating the audience over the head or becoming preachy.”

Tim Walton, playing lead character Jeff in his second appearance on the Langhorne Players stage, agrees with the quality assessment of *Lobby Hero*. “The characters are well-evolved over the course of the production. Because it's fast-moving, once you figure out who the characters are, it's easy to fall in line with the story.”

Players veteran Angela Alexander says playing Dawn, a rookie cop, was at first less than a walk in the park. “This was, for me, very tough. I tend to play the girl-next-door girlfriend type,” she explains. “You know, very likable, maybe a little timid. So playing a tough, trash-talking cop is something of a stretch.” But from the ease with which she slips into Dawn's skin the moment she hits the rehearsal stage, it's apparently a comfortable stretch.

Comfort isn't necessarily what the troupe is going for with this play, though. “I think *Lobby Hero* presents the audience with a question that most people don't want to face in their lives,” says Harris Goodman, an Off-Broad-Street Theater vet, of his second production with the Players. “That moral dilemma alone makes it a very challenging piece of work.” He recognizes his character, William, as an embodiment of that challenge. “[In this play], we're not just playing the characters,” he posits, “we're symbols of the different choices everyone has to make.”

Ryan Listman, whose character Bill is the veteran cop partner to Dawn's rookie, believes this grasp of the material is one of the things that makes Langhorne Players productions some of the best in the region. “I had a theater background in New York, and when I moved to Lambertville, my sister (a Langhorne Players subscriber) told me I needed to see this company. She was right. This is truly comparable to any of the best off-Broadway productions I've experienced.”

The Players stage their productions at their home base, the historic Spring Garden Mill building in Tyler State Park, on Rt. 332 just off Rt. 413 in Langhorne. The theater is an intimate, 73-seat affair that can truly boast “not a bad seat in the house.” Air conditioning, refreshments and an ongoing original art exhibit in the lobby make each visit pleasant and enjoyable.

Lobby Hero runs from June 6-21, with show times on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays at 7:30 PM, and Fridays and Saturdays at 8:30 PM. Tickets are \$10 – \$12, available with reservations through the box office at 215-860-0818. Interested readers can learn more about the troupe and theater on their website at www.langhorneplayers.org.