

Arts & Entertainment

Every Brilliant Thing Sparkles at Dreamcatcher Repertory Theatre

By SUSAN MYRILL DOUGHERTY
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SUMMIT – Suicide. Depression. Lots of laughs. What’s wrong with this picture? Nothing. It’s the genius formula that British playwright Duncan Macmillan (with assist by actor Jonny Donahoe) used to pen the tender one-act play *Every Brilliant Thing* now playing weekends at Dreamcatcher Repertory Theatre in the Oakes Center in Summit. It’s a little gem – and “little” is not meant as a diminutive term. This is an hour and fifteen minutes of reflections on life augmented by uplifting interaction with the audience.

Thoughtfully directed by Artistic Director of Dreamcatcher Laura Ekstrand, the show is presented in a theater in the round configuration with some of the audience members sitting on the stage itself and the others in the first three rows of pews. Yes, pews. This theater space was once a church, but transforms beautifully for this intimate play. Audience members are encouraged to be a part of the program by reading slips of paper or other props that are part of the storyline. No pressure – it’s all voluntary participation, but it’s an enjoyable experience for a non-theater person to step out of his comfort zone and be open to it.

The story itself could fall flat with a less talented actor as the narrator and sole character. Clark Scott Carmichael, a member of Ac-

tors’ Equity Association, the union of professional actors, is perfectly cast. He draws us into the character’s life even before the show begins. Often, actors get into character by sequestering themselves, going over the script or blocking in their minds. Not Mr. Carmichael, who casually walks among the audience before “curtain.” It might be a part of his blueprint to get the audience on his side. But we don’t need much persuasion. As a person, he’s conversant, amiable and approachable, so light banter is easy.

When the play begins, Mr. Carmichael takes the audience on a journey back to when his character was a six-year-old who finds out that the reason his mother is late in picking him up from school is that she is in the hospital. She has attempted suicide. His dad (played by an audience volunteer) tells him she’s “done something stupid.” That’s when he thinks of things that make life worth living and starts a list for her that takes him through the next two decades to complete. He places the early draft of the list on her pillow to convince her why she should stick around in this life. She’s depressed and it seems she doesn’t want to listen.

But we audience members listen to those salient, profound, and sometimes silly feelings and items of the list that bring a smile of recognition to our faces. Quite a bit of improvisation takes place throughout the

evening which is handled expertly by Mr. Carmichael who bounces effortlessly on and off the intimate staging area like Peter Pan. The play becomes a conversation with the audience more than a monologue. And we are better for being a part of this thoughtful work.

Dreamcatcher Repertory Theatre, founded in 1994, is a non-profit professional ensemble of actors who “share contemporary, life-affirming stories that foster a deeper understanding of how we are all connected.” Its tag line is “Ensemble theatre with humor and heart.” And this show delivers on that promise.

The show runs only one more weekend: October 6 to 8 with 8 p.m. evening performances and a 2 p.m. Sunday performance. For tickets, call (800) 838-3006 or www.DreamcatcherRep.org. The theater at the Oakes Center is located at 120 Morris Avenue in Summit.



A CASUAL MOMENT... Clark Scott Carmichael, the unnamed, sole character in *Every Brilliant Thing*, talks of love and loss in the show that runs through this weekend at the Oakes Center in Summit. Dream catcher Repertory Theatre, under the artful direction of Laura Ekstrand, brings this poignant, funny one-act play to life.

Macbeth Performance Planned at Fanwood Library

FANWOOD – Rousing action and chills await when the Hudson Shakespeare Company serves up an eerie take on Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* on Wednesday, October 18 at 7 p.m. Just in time for Halloween, this free performance reminds audiences that Shakespeare was no stranger to the supernatural. Ghosts, witches and bloody business take

the stage at the Fanwood Memorial Library.

Since 1992, the Hudson Shakespeare Company has produced over 100 productions and counting in a variety of venues from city parks to libraries to courtrooms. The company’s adaptation of *Macbeth* has been described as, “...impressively strange, sometimes sinister relentless

...sheer fun to watch.”

This performance is sponsored by the Friends of the Fanwood Memorial Library. For more information and registration for this or any programs visit www.fanwoodlibrary.org or call (908) 322-6400. The Fanwood Memorial Library is located at 5 Forest Road, Fanwood.