

Williamstown Theatre Festival, Williamstown, MA
we are continuous, by Harrison David Rivers. Directed by Tyler Thomas.
Reviewed by J Peter Bergman.

“Sometimes I just think about him, and he calls me.”

Relationships can be overwhelming. In Harrison David Rivers’ play, “we are continuous” relationships are more than that; they are extremely special and though there are three characters in the play a fourth character emerges and reaches a state of importance totally unexpected. Identified in the program as Mother, Son, Husband, the three people who populate two apartments - well conceived and executed by scenic designer DOTS - are always a part of one another’s lives, even when out of reach of one another.



Leland Fowler and Brenda Pressley on DOTS’ set; Photo: Stephanie Berger

In Rivers’ semiautobiographical play there are many questions left unanswered. The form of the play begins the premise of a new reality by having each of the characters narrate the story rather than play out the scenes themselves. Mother is always in the family apartment while her son and his husband move about more freely more frequently. We witness their meeting as each of them recalls it; we watch them tell us how their interest in each other grew; we watch as they negotiate rejection and health issues, each talking about how the other one’s reactions affected them. At first this technique is off-putting, but as we grow accustomed to it the play takes on a storybook quality that is extremely moving as their emotions observed become our emotions experienced.

Leland Fowler makes this narrative form seem natural and reasonable without half trying. His performance is emotional, though he doesn't often deal with his own character, leaving that to Tom Holcomb. Holcomb's Husband is more of a monitor for the plot and he handles the



Leland Fowler; Photo: Stephanie Berger



Tom Holcomb;
Photo: Stephanie Berger

overview handsomely. The two men share more than just a stage; they share life.

With Rivers' own problems at the core of the play, Fowler has a double challenge - how to be the character and be the author, and illustrate what makes them different within the play. This is helped by the play's construction, for "Husband" tells us more about "Son" than "Son" ever does. Of course when it comes to "Son" "Mother" has her own opinions and in the gloriously talented interpretation of her, Brenda Pressley takes command of much of the play. She and Fowler verbally create the picture of the unseen, but definitely felt, character of "Father" and his presence in the narrative forces a large part of the audience's reactions to the happenings in the play. He is an understandable, though barely acceptable, figure, well drawn by the playwright.



Brenda Pressley; Photo: Stephanie Berger

This was the second play in a row this week to leave me in tears, by the way. The writing, the telling, the motion of the play as directed by Tyler Thomas, contribute equally to the very dynamic conclusion of the work. It is a play that I will long remember and cherish. It deals with life as I could have known it, but didn't. It deals with everyone's life, including yours.

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we are continuouus plays on the Nikos Stage at Williams College's '62 Center for Theatre and Dance, 1000 Main Street, Williamstown, Ma through August 14. For information and tickets call 413-458-3253.