

Bridge Street Theatre, Catskill, NY
co-production with The Fat Knight Theatre

Chip and Gus, a comedy with balls

Written and performed by John Ahlin and Christopher Patrick Mullen

Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

“It’s not right to force ideas on people. Force: bad...”

When is a comedy more than a comedy? When it has balls, obviously, and this play has four hundred ping-pong balls. That table tennis game sits firmly in the center of this delightfully funny play conceived and written and conceivably staged by its two actors, John Ahlin and Christopher Patrick Mullen. For eighty-seven minutes the two men play ping-pong, discuss life, education, marriage, sexual orientation, work, moving, isolation, consolation, consultation and their relationship while the game goes on. Long held secrets are revealed. Personal fears are unveiled. Grammar is discussed. Disgust is revealed and revelations are displayed. And even the most tragic moments are funny. Who would have thought a game of ping-pong could produce a production this enthralling.



John Ahlin as Gus, Christopher Patrick Mullen as Chip;
Photo: John Sowle

Certainly not the opening night audience who couldn’t stop laughing, me included. These two men carry on at a rapid, intense tempo making me wish I could see the play again in order to hear the laugh lines I may have missed while I was laughing.

Chip is an adjunct music instructor at the same college where Gus teaches philosophy. They see one another often in the strict confines of work, but they have special Tuesday night meeting in the back room of a bar in Schenectady where they meet once a month for these sporting events that keep them

sane, Chip through his divorce and Gus through his seriousness. They are an ill-matched pair of friends and yet they could not conceivably exist alone, without each other.

Bridge Street Theatre has brought this production, mounted by The Fat Knight Theatre of New York City to its venue because John Sowle and Steven Patterson saw it and loved it and had to have it in Catskill to tickle the funnybones of their audience. It is a very worthwhile effort for

the show is pure comedy from start to finish with a strangely unanticipated set of revelations and an ending you won't see coming. Both Mullen and Ahlin deliver brilliantly and the show will leave you weak. There is really only a week in which to see it and if you enjoy laughing then see it you must. What makes a comedy a comedy, I asked above. Well, these two men know, and they will show you with their balls on the table, on the floor and in the air. If you sit in the front row you might want to bring your own paddle.

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ChipandGus plays at Bridge Street Theatre, 44 West Bridge Street. Catskill, New York through October 6. For information and tickets go to bridgest.org or call 518-943-3818.