

Ghent Playhouse, Ghent, NY

*The Outsider* by Paul Slade Smith. Directed by Sky Vogel

Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman

***“It’s good to meet you. . .everytime.”***

Ned Newley, a modest, if moderate, man has become governor when his state’s chief executive is forced to resign after a scandalous affair. He doesn’t want to be governor; he is too afraid of public speaking, of being visible in any way. His assistant, his only staff, Dave, is willing to help him over the hump but it takes an outsider, Arthur Vance, to manipulate the new chief executive into shape. He is helped by pollster Paula and new temp assistant, Louise - call me Lulu - Peakes who cannot be trained or constrained. This play about politics, with a peculiar relevance to today’s political landscape, is on stage now at the Ghent Playhouse and it is a funny, funny show that leaves you thinking about things like popularity, understanding and relationships.



Cathy Lee-Visscher, Alexandra Doggette, Sky Vogel, Leo Hernandez, Steven Leifer,  
Dylan LeSage, Emily Bryan; Photo: Linda Murawski

Director Vogel took over the lead role when family tragedy took the original actor out of the play. He is, to put it simply, brilliant in the role: funny, touching, endearing and loveable. As good as he is, however, he is surrounded by a troupe of players who shine as brightly as their director. Leo Hernandez as Dave, his assistant, is charming, funny, sweetly awkward and wonderfully available. His character, as he plays it, is an audience favorite. He keeps the play’s viewers sympathetically in his back pocket and we feel his pain, his aspirations and his tiny



Leo Hernandez, Cathy Lee-Visscher, Sky Vogel;  
Photo: Linda Murawski

triumphs. Emily Bryan as his poll taking compatriot, sparks her role with innuendo and terrific line readings that get their maximum effect every time. Steven Leifer as political star-maker Arthur also delivers a perfect portrait of such a man. He is unstoppable as he maneuvers Ned and Dave, and ultimately Lulu, through the many travails of politics. As good as this cast is nothing tops the comic performance of Cathy Lee Visscher as Lulu. Playing someone as completely unaware of her own limitations is not an easy chore, but Visscher has mastered the art of risible acting with a simplicity and honesty that leaves you weak, holding your

sides and shaking with that risk of believing that Lulu is a true possibility in our times.

In the small role of A.C. Dylan LeSage scores nicely, backing up Alexandra Doggette as the TV reporter sent out to cover the political shenanigans that form the plot of this play.

Never before had four cue-cards meant so much in a play. That has to be seen to be believed along with color cues and every other kind of cue except billiard cues. This is a very amusing, very delightful comedy well put together and wonderfully delivered.

If you like to laugh and want to shake the peculiarities of our current situation nationally, this is the best two hour and twenty minute method of putting things into perspective. See the play, I say, and laugh your trauma away.



Sky Vogel, Alexandra Doggette;  
Photo: Linda Murawski

+ 10/12/2024 +

**The Outsider** plays at the Ghent Playhouse, 6 Town Hall Place, Ghent, NY through October 20. For tickets and information call (518) 392-6264 or go to: [theghentplayhouse@gmail.com](mailto:theghentplayhouse@gmail.com)