

Baby with the bathwater



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Red Rock Community College's adaptation of Christopher Durang's play *Baby with the Bathwater*, directed by James O'Leary, concluded its 8-show run with a sold out finale performance on Sunday April 23rd, 2005. When the lights came up on the bassinet in the otherwise darkness of the stage, the image more or less stands for everything that follows – childhood, loneliness and abandonment. It seems that an icon of the entire human experience, not just the implied infancy, is being presented. When the lights come up even further, the bassinet gives way in significance to a married couple standing over it: John (Kyle LaBoria), the father that coos at "Daddy's little baked potato," and Helen (Amien Conway), the mother who object to him calling their baby a vegetable. Durang had an interesting way of making illogical disconnections seem perfectly logical. A good example of this is Nanny. Sweeping onto the stage with demonic energy and a warped tinge of Mary Poppins, Nanny (Nancy Thomas) good-naturedly offers bad advice for child rearing and in the next breath optioning Dad for "quickies in the kitchen." I found Nanny to an existentialist theme in making comments like "There's no such thing as right and wrong. There's just fun." Thomas brought maturity to the otherwise young cast and seemed to thoroughly enjoy her role. Nanny could have been overly campy, but Thomas kept it believable and entertaining and captured the subtle domineering nature of the character. Whereas Nanny was consistent from beginning to end, I have to convey my disapproval with LaBoria's portrayal of John, the dad. LaBoria aptly depicted the fragility and weariness of a new parent, but failed to reach any depth or humor. I think it would have been better if John had been placed with a more deer-in-the-headlights feel. I saw John more villainous in this rendition and wished for more of a victimized appeal. This out-sized tale deserved better

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framework. The set was drab and too simplistic for this type of play. Being set in the 80's, I expected more of a tacky retro aesthetic that would have supported the outlandish play with equally drastic visuals. Maybe the intent was to keep the focus on the actors by neglecting the backdrop? Either way, it did no justice. Director James O'Leary's presence throughout the play was rather absent to me. He did make good use of stage movements and employed the full range the stage offered, but I am left here with lackluster feelings. I feel the momentum of the play was non-existent, only offering a general malaise of sub par perspective. While watching the play, I could sense a more implicit complexity wanting to get out. After all, most of Durang's satires appear flat, but actually has a great possibility for much depth. O'Leary failed to tap into the content's true substance. My attention was finally sparked in Scene 4. Up to this point, Daisy has been spoken for. Getting a glimpse at the character through the personal dialogue of psychoanalysis offered an emotional grasp heretofore vacant. The use of lighting in this scene, alternating sides to provide division of time and mounting individual awareness, was good. After the lights came up and people began to file out, I reflected and acknowledged my approval for the play itself, but remained incensed towards the performances. I felt that I would have gotten more out of it in reading the script and foregoing the actual presentation. This interpretation would not receive a recommendation for me.