

Shepard's 'Simpatico' opens at Blue Barn Theatre

BY DIANE BRODERICK
Staff writer

To explore the unexplored: It is a mission the Blue Barn Theatre's staff takes seriously.

And when it strives to carry out that mission, the Blue Barn often returns to the works of Sam Shepard, Pulitzer Prize winner in 1979 and author of more than 45 plays.

"Simpatico," written in 1995, is just one example of Shepard's hard-hitting writing, and it opens tonight at Omaha's Blue Barn.

"(Shepard) has a really amazing gift of sort of delving into the hidden world or the underworld of America, and not many people can do that," said the play's director, Kevin Lawler.

"To be able to dramatize it with really vivid characters and plot, I mean that's genius, that's brilliance."

"Simpatico" takes place over two days and is set in the fast-paced world of professional horse-racing.

"It's pretty complex, and it's a thriller," said Lawler, who does not want too much of the plot to be revealed for reasons of suspense.

Theater Preview The Facts



What: "Simpatico"
Where: The Blue Barn Theatre, 614 S. 11th Street, Omaha
When: April 1-25, Thursday through Sunday nights at 8
Cost: \$10 for students and seniors, \$12 for general admission
The Skinny: "Kinetic" production explores one man's desperation

Structured as a detective story, "Simpatico" is about a desperate man trying to hold onto his wife and career, and it centers on themes of memory and loyalty.

It involves these two men in their 40s, Carter and Vinny, who have grown up together and been best friends since they were kids.

The play is a reaction to some "underworld" dealings they were involved in about ten years before, and it explores how they deal with their problems from the past and the people who get

pulled into the fray.

Katherine Neary plays one such character, Cecilia.

"(Cecilia) is a younger girl, just generally trying to pull off a lot more than she can handle," Neary said.

"She pretty much lives in her own little world and suddenly finds herself in the midst of other people's business."

Neary also describes her character as something of a diversionary tactic who comes between Carter and Vinny as a sort of messenger.

To complement the play with music is Omaha blues artist MoJoPo.

"He will be playing live every night," Lawler said. "He's sort of the old, wise man on the mountain looking over the play."

The Blue Barn typically uses recorded music as its soundtrack, but Lawler wanted to give "Simpatico" a unique touch.

Neary said MoJoPo's music set off the play's message beautifully.

"It's basically the soundtrack for the play," Neary said. "It gives ('Simpatico') a much lonelier feeling than just lights or staging alone could give it. It sets the mood excellently."

But, Neary said, that forlorn attitude doesn't extend to everything in "Simpatico."

"It has pretty fast-paced dialogue," Neary said.

"It moves very quickly and there's a lot of action."

"It's a very kinetic play."



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