

Windham Hill Theatre Guild presents complex comedy "Body Awareness"

By Kevin T. Baldwin

CORRESPONDENT

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WILLIMANTIC, CT: Fractured Theatre at Windham Hill Theatre Guild presents "Body Awareness" by Annie Baker. Performances at the Burton Leavitt Theatre, 779 Main Street, Willimantic, CT 06226. Feb 28, March 1, 2, at 7:30pm, and March 2 at 2:00pm. Ticket prices \$19.00 per Adult, \$16.00 per Senior (60+) and Student, \$12.00 per Child, \$14.00 per ECSU/QVCC/UCONN Student. Bulk Tickets \$15.00. For tickets and reservations contact (860) 423-2245 or email info@windhamtheatreguild.org

Written by Annie Baker. Directed by Ava Rose Molnar.

CAST INCLUDES: Preeti Tiwari, Dale Magnuson, Cody Motivans, Mark Fitton.

Multiple complex and thought-provoking elements are presented in the two-act play "Body awareness," presented by Fractured Theatre at Windham Hill Theatre Guild.

Written by Pulitzer Prize winner Annie Baker, the play marked her Off-Broadway debut.

Set at the modern day but fictitious Shirley State College in Vermont, the comedy begins with Phyllis (Preeti Tiwari), a professor of psychology, writing on a chalkboard center stage proudly proclaiming a campus-wide "Body Awareness Week."

Phyllis is super-organized and has the entire week's event perfectly mapped out. Yet, as each day passes, and is marked on the chalkboard, Phyllis's perfectly organized week concludes in utter chaos.

Phyllis lives with her lesbian life partner Joyce (Dale Magnuson) who is a high school social studies teacher. Also in the household is Joyce's 21-year-old son, Jared (Cody Motivans), from Joyce's prior marriage.

Tiwari is exceptional as resilient staunch feminist Phyllis who, while otherwise shows herself to be strong-willed and determined, when it comes to the love of her life, Joyce, her resilience is sorely tested.

Motivans gives a quite methodically layered performance as Jared who shows signs of Asperger's syndrome, which he refuses to either acknowledge or seek treatment.

Frank (Mark Fitton), is an aging professional photographer, who specializes in artistic photos of nude women which offends Phyllis. Frank is staying with Phyllis and Joyce for the week and immediately irritates Phyllis and heightens the tension between everybody in the house.

Fitton is extremely at ease with the character of Frank and riffs well off the other actors on stage, but none moreso than Motivans as Jared in one of the best scenes in the show.

Magnuson also impresses as Joyce, who agrees to pose nude for Frank, despite Phyllis's intense objections.

While all of Baker's characters are clearly defined, under the superb direction of Ava Rose Molnar, and with Frank's character used as a catalyst, we discover their respective various vulnerabilities which show their humanity and culminate in the show's touching conclusion.

The show runs 90 minutes with one intermission.

Three and a half stars.