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Curtainbox captures Mamet with 'Plow'

Story Discussion

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David Burke | Posted: Monday, April 11, 2011 5:22 pm | **No Comments Posted**



Contributed photo The Curtainbox Theatre Company will present "Speed the Plow" at the Village Theater in the Village of East Davenport. (Contributed photo)

IF YOU GO

What: "Speed-the-Plow" by the Curtainbox Theatre Company
When: 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays-Saturdays and 3 p.m. Sundays through April 23
Where: Village Theatre, 2113 E. 11th St., Village of East Davenport
How much: \$20 for adults, \$15 for senior citizens, \$12 for students
Information: (563) 322-8504 or TheCurtainbox.com

You have to admire Curtainbox Theatre Company's "Speed-the-Plow," if for no other reason, for successfully pulling off minutes upon minutes of rapid-fire dialogue between its two main characters.

Newly minted film executive Bobby Gould (played by Mike Schulz) and his friend/underling Charlie Fox (Daniel M. Hernandez) provide a breakneck pace in the first act, with no stalls, stops or stutters. Completely comprehensible and it fully advances the plot, too.

Gould is energetically diving into the mogul mode, with the ability in his back pocket to give the green light to one \$20 million-plus-budget film a year, without asking his superior. Fox is pushing him toward a natural moneymaking blockbuster set in prison.

But enter Karen (Erin Churchill), an office temp. Given an ethereal, pretentious script to fulfill a "courtesy read" edict from Gould, she tries to convince him - in the office and in his living room - that it is the script for him to produce.

Playwright David Mamet never shows his cards to tell whether Gould is interested in the script only because Karen is, whether he'd do the movie to get closer to her or if Karen is manipulating him.

Schulz is playing his most well-rounded character yet since returning to acting two-plus years ago, making Gould a man

with a definite gray area and far less black or white.

Hernandez, in his first role outside St. Ambrose University (from which he graduates next month) holds his own as Fox, both in cooperation and conflict with Gould.

But the most enlightening performance comes from Churchill, a regular in area theater, including Circa '21 Dinner Playhouse. Long delegated to smaller roles around these parts, Churchill is vivacious and cunning as Karen.

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April 2011

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| | | | | | 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
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| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |

Curtainbox founder Kim Furness, directing her own company here for the first time, knows when to shift to different gears at the appropriate moment. The entrance of Karen changes the tempo of the show immediately.

The functional set works well for both the office and Gould's home, with fairly quick scene changes in the three-act, 90-minute-ish, no-intermission show. The office background, resembling a giant length of film, looks nice but later appears rather flimsy.

Most impressive technically is the use of lighting effects, with Karen seen in shadows long before she makes her entrance, and a purple, pink and green light show on the back wall as the sound of an old-time film projector starts up.

The script may be a bit inside baseball for those not familiar with the movie business, but the conflict between the head, the heart and perhaps other body parts is universal.

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