

Pawtucket's Seussical Has Heart, But Lacks Focus



I went into this production of *Seussical* having never seen the show before. Like anyone, I know the classic Dr. Seuss lore, have a deep attachment to the characters and can see why the show is so popular among local theaters with its bright colors, fun musical numbers and stories suitable for children, but subtly tackling real issues for adults (Mayzie LaBird actually abandons her child for a life of partying). Musicals are always a bear to produce and they take a lot of moving parts working together to look seamless. The casting of this production offered up some real talent with several standouts, but it felt a bit like too much was resting on their talents alone without much guidance to get everyone working together. This is not to say there wasn't chemistry among cast members, as there often was, but rather that it felt as though each actor was working in a show without enough cohesion to tie it all up.

The set, designed by C. Richard Koster and Brian Mulvey, offered great levels and on-point Seussian scenery. Somewhat less successful were costumes that were well-thought-out but felt one size too big on almost every actor and wigs so distracting I often found myself just watching the hair. Directors often tell actors to "get the hair out of their eyes," so it was surprising to see fake hair placed purposefully in the faces needing to be seen.

I was most impressed by the beautiful "Notice Me, Horton," a duet with Ryan Livingston as Horton the Elephant and Dalita Getzoyan as Gertrude McFuzz. They were locked in on each other even when the song leads them apart in the story. It felt like true collaborative work as a culmination after each of their solo numbers were beautifully performed.

Livingston's consistent stage presence and tension as the sweet but anxious Horton was transporting. His voice is like a warm hug in its effortlessness. He was the strong backbone of the production due to his ever-interesting facial expressions and in-character body movements creating fun visuals even when he wasn't the focus of a scene.

Getzoyan has a true understanding of how to draw an audience in. When she smiles or when she is sad, she knows how to express it so that the crowd is with her on the ride. She exudes confidence and has the kind of singing voice that you watch with anticipation because you know she is going to flawlessly hit every big note. For a lovely petite little bird, her energy fills up the whole auditorium with her Gertrude and only a one-feather tail (which incidentally had two feathers, driving my OCD mad).

Andrew Bobola is listed as both director and choreographer, two jobs that individually would be enormous undertakings for anyone with a musical production. It is important to have these roles separated so that the checks and balances of a director's vision and a choreographer's talent combine to create smooth dance numbers. A lot of the dance numbers showed clear skill by the cast, but an unorganized mishmash of movement when put all together.

Most notably in the dance ensemble were two of the Citizens of Who, Kimberly Spera and Samantha Weiman, who shone every time they were on stage. There were several occasions where they were relegated to the back and I wished they had been given more to do center stage with their bright smiles and clear dance ability.

Some of the liveliest moments of the show came in the form of some of the smaller roles such as Christopher Margodonna as General Genghis Kahn Schmitz and Tylar Ibrahima as the Mayor of Whoville. Seeing their impeccable comedic timing and bold choices amidst what felt a little like slapdash comedy left me wanting more from the rest of the cast as a whole. Bright colors, big songs and fantastical characters should leave the audience smiling, but when some members of the cast lost focus or dropped a smile when they were not in the spotlight, the bigger picture felt unfinished.

Joseph Carvalho led the band with ease and expertise. The music was clear and energetic and always kept aware of the actors it was scoring. Unfortunately, in the auditorium, they were placed in front of the stage, which isn't always a fixable problem, but this puts a lot of pressure on every actor's microphone. I noticed several key characters did not wear microphones and their performances were drowned out by the music playing between them and the audience.

The messages from Dr. Seuss are those of heart, community and love. When producing a show of this magnitude it is important to keep those sentiments at the forefront. Theater, and especially musicals, with their endless moving parts, can be a tense process, but it remains important to take a moment

before the first light comes up to remember to smile for the audience through whatever is happening behind the scenes. It never matters what chaos happens backstage, if you dance through it and beam for the crowd, they only remember how good they felt when they watched it. This show found those moments and showed some real ability, but lost the overall focus and message.

Pawtucket Community Players presents Seussical The Musical, running through Nov 24 at Jenks Auditorium, 350 Division St, Pawtucket (across from McCoy Stadium). Performances are Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30pm and Sundays at 2pm. Purchase e-tickets online and print at home to avoid the line - <https://app.arts-people.com/index.php?actions=4&p=1> or call 401.726.6860 to reserve.

[Fun Home: Wilbury's expertly executed show leaves audiences in awe](#)



Rachael Warren, Paige Barlow, and Shannon Hartman in FUN HOME at The Wilbury Theatre Group; photo by Erin X. Smithers.

Popular Broadway musicals have always classically been about fanfare, big spectacle numbers and broad smiles all around. While there is a place in the canon for the traditional shows of the past, newer shows have paved the way for depth of character, intimate stories and connecting with our emotions. *Fun Home* was originally a graphic novel by Alison Bechdel then turned off-Broadway to Broadway sensation in 2013 and 2015, respectively. In its humble beginnings it was an intimate project for Bechdel telling of her youth as a woman who always knew she was gay. It is the story of her unique father, their relationship, filled with both love and pain, and the things that connect us through generations to our parents. Originally, the form of the graphic novel was seen as a “lesser form” of literature and such subject matter was usually reserved for the pages of long written autobiographies. Breaking the mold is everything *Fun Home* is about and it does so in all the best ways.

In the original Broadway production of this show Alison Bechdel's adult self is complemented by two other younger actresses portraying her as a young girl and as a college student. The show weaves the three actresses around each other and jumps around Bechdel's timeline to allow the audience to find parts of the story through the eyes of all her ages. The perspective of each phase is not uncommon in how the mind naturally processes conflict and memory, and who we become because of them. This script, by nature, spills the guts of the protagonist from the very beginning, so it is hard to write too deeply about the show without giving it all away. What is important to know instead is about the people who stage and interpret this biographical masterpiece.

The Wilbury Theatre Group has taken on a bear of a task and produced a show almost indistinguishable from the Broadway iteration. The only major difference is the set, which in this case is smarter and more engaging than the original and is able here to become a character itself. Director Josh Short and assistant director Aaron Blanck take multi-level scaffolding and transport audiences from an old mansion in Pennsylvania, to a college dorm, to a seedy New York apartment. Scenic design by Monica Shinn creates a space that gives the actors the ability to be on set without interrupting the scene they are recalling in their mind. Picturesque moments are made simply by the presence of all the Alisons watching their life unfold.

The present-day Alison, portrayed by Rachel Warren, watches much of the action from a platform above everyone as she furiously sketches moments in an effort to accurately recall how it all unfolded. Warren, a well-known resident actor from Trinity Repertory Company, fills this lead with power, heart, and beauty. So much of this role comes from just her presence as things happen around her, and Warren's ability to consistently engage and react takes the audience along emotionally with her. One begins to look forward most to the moments when she steps into the light and sings. Her command of all she surveys, the music and her character are masterful and the show feels genuine in her ever-competent grasp.

Arguably the part of the father is as much the lead as Alison. Jason Loete tackles this challenging individual with clear compassion. The struggle in the father's storyline is that he is equal parts brilliant, caring and deeply troubled. The dramatic switches from loving parent to cold, demanding patriarch are sympathetic in Loete's depiction. Even after an unfounded outburst he shows the heart and fury of a man unable to understand his place in his family and how difficult it can be to maintain composure in a stifling world. Loete terrifies and endears audiences with his adept maneuvering through the timelines and strongly props up every musical number he is a part of.

One of the highlights of the show comes from Jennifer Mischley as Alison's mother, Helen. Mrs. Bechdel is the voice of reason and never quite the focus of the action. Yet Mischley finds her moments to shine and, in her one solo, she transforms from familiar housewife to a complex woman looking back on how her life became so unfamiliar and turbulent ("days and days and days, that's how it happens"). In an instant, this character that hadn't factored much into the forefront, becomes the most relatable and tragic of them all. Mischley is poised, stunning, and moving as she shifts the focus briefly to herself and then just as swiftly and adeptly away again.

Remaining are the numerous younger actors and actresses who consistently allow this show to shine. Paige Barlow plays Small Alison in her Wilbury debut. A middle school student from southern Rhode Island, she is no stranger to the stage as she is a member of The Talent Factory's Elite Theatre Company in North Kingstown. The tiniest member of the cast carries so much of the amazing music in this show; Barlow is a powerhouse of energy, talent and musical fortitude. For Alison's college years we

meet Joan, her first girlfriend (Daraja Hinds) who draws attention even in the moments she is just passing through. Hinds strong stage presence makes the attraction to her palpable as Middle Alison (Shannon Hartman) finds her true self through Joan.

This expertly executed show is everything and more that audiences would get from Broadway to a touring company. *Fun Home* is an important contemporary musical that will surely one day be a well-loved part of the historical canon. It is an important piece that will leave audiences in awe and craving to see it again. If given the option to pay hundreds on Broadway or for the talented touring company, one can sit dozens of rows away and still be blown away by the magic. Yet now, we have the option of seeing it locally at a theater that is putting on a show absolutely on par with every other venue where the story has been told.

The Wilbury Theatre Group presents Fun Home, May 23 - June 16. Directed by Josh Short, Music Direction by Tom Chace, choreography by Ali Kenner Brodsky. 40 Sonoma Court, PVD. For tickets and more information, contact 401-400-7100 x0, email : tickets@thewilburygroup.org or visit www.thewilburygroup.org. This production of Fun Home has been recognized by StageSource's 'Standing O' for promoting gender parity in theater.

[What's In a Name? Everything, it Seems — CPTC's Married Name Takes the Stage](#)



Left to right:
Adam Preston as Dan, Luis Minaya as
Ethan, Justin Pimentel as Rex, Ryan
Leverone as Al
Photo credit: Jason Talbot

The newly refurbished AS220 black box at 95 Empire is still familiar, but very finely polished and cleaned up around the edges. Upon entering, the set is what looks to be a chic New York loft. It's become part of the experience with any Counter Productions show that the set is a fully fleshed-out character in and of itself. There is a deep appreciation for the small details, even on parts of the set that never get used in the script. This type of meticulous set design (in this instance, Katie Russell handles design duties for CPTC) transports the audience and that, combined with the seating in the round, creates a fully immersive evening of theater.

The Married Name is a world premiere by local writer, actor and artistic director of Epic Theatre Company, Kevin Broccoli. Having started out largely with his well-known monologue shows, featuring droves of talented local actors, his writing has shifted to also include many full-length plays as well (his *Lizzie Borden*, *Lizzie Borden* just concluded a successful run). The dialogue in this original piece is riveting, fast-paced, thoughtful and emotionally deep. The show consists of four men at a seemingly innocuous dinner party. In the first few minutes, we learn small yet pivotal details about the relationships in the room. Two of the men are engaged and planning their wedding, the other two are each of their best friends. The conversation is normal wedding banter about terrible DJs, who isn't invited and problems with vendors. The first hint of a mood shift comes from the ongoing jab about which of these men is the "bride." Both grooms vehemently claim they aren't and even start to show a little irritation at the thought. From there the action begins to rise until long-kept secrets are being shouted, opinions about each other are being slung and relationships shift in and out of stability from moment to moment.

Riveting from the first lines of the script, the cast of this show was exceptional in both their performances and the nuances they found to each stand out. Having an ensemble cast with no specific lead, and similarly no weak link, is often discussed, but rarely found. This group of actors was set up to succeed with ever-moving pace and blocking from director Victoria Ezikovich. Having four actors in the round and largely at a dinner table can prove to be a daunting task. Sight lines are always a concern, but these men never seem to stop moving and as a direct result it feels like every moment can be seen from all sides. Ezikovich has a clear love of the material and her actors that can be felt in how connected everyone was. Ever-rotating feuds and allegiances can feel quick or phony if it is staged without care, but the audience is along for the ride, seeing and agreeing with every side of the story.

Rex, played by Justin Pimentel, is the first obvious "bride" in the group and plays an aspiring actor with a lot of big feelings and opinions. Pimentel draws so much of the attention to him because his performance is wildly electric. His deeply offensive cuts and brutal honesty keep him at what feels like the center of the drama, but as an actor, Pimentel is easy to love and root for due to his charm and commitment to the role. It is the type of performance that leaves everything out on the floor, but is done with precision and clear intent.

Fiancée to Rex is Dan (Adam Preston), a dashing and elegant presence against the more frenetic Pimentel. Preston has the large task of being the "sensible" one, which can often be less glamorous to play, but yields high rewards when done this expertly. Often the fixer in the group, Preston maintains a cool demeanor and a striking yet powerful calm.

Best friend of Rex is Ethan, the snarky and intelligent one, shown hilariously by the delightful Luis Minaya. Most of the perfectly timed comedic moments come from the side commentary by Ethan, and his fun and biting relationship with Rex keeps everyone on their toes. Minaya is quick, smart and perfectly witty. His energy is similarly as big as Pimentel's, but played so differently, each stands out on

their own.

The last member of this insane dinner party is best friend to Dan, Al. Ryan Leverone as Al is a hidden jewel in this big personality cast. He says probably the least, but somehow comes out affecting the audience the most. He has moments of genuine love and kindness as well as gut-wrenching lines that could crack a heart in two. A truly standout performance with so much depth, he is the beating heart of this group. There are moments where he is simply sitting on the floor clutching a throw pillow and amidst all the action, all that can be seen is the stunning look on his emotive face. The clear commitment to this role is obvious and beautiful to witness.

There are so many great shows going on in Rhode Island every weekend, but pair this being the final season of a Providence gem (this is Counter Productions' next-to-last production) with a play this rewarding, and that makes *The Married Name* a must-see. It is rare to feel transported and invested in a group of actors so thoroughly. The audience leaves feeling introspective, happy, touched and most importantly, entertained. This is a non-stop ride well worth prioritizing in its few upcoming showings. All involved created something really special and totally new in a vast sea of local shows.

Counter-Productions Theatre Company's production of The Married Name written by Kevin Broccoli, directed by Victoria Ezikovich runs March 15-24 with Adam Preston, Justin Pimental, Ryan Leverone and Luis Minaya at AS220 Black Box Theatre, 95 Empire St, PVD. More information online at cptcri.com.

[CPTC's Night Mother Provides an Intense Night of Theater](#)



Photo credit: Jason Talbot

The reputation of *Night Mother* by Marsha Norman is that it is intense. When I casually chatted with several local frequent theatergoers about going to see the show, they responded with some form of, "Wow, what a show." Without having much more than a brief plot summary, I wasn't sure if that was a good "wow" or a bad one. As it turns out, there is a third way someone can mean wow: to be left stunned and feeling both good and bad. Counter Production's undertaking of this stunning show took

very difficult subject matter and delivered a top-notch experience with some of the finest acting and staging I have seen in the semi-professional realm.

All I knew of the show walking in was this: A mother and her grown daughter are cohabitating in the 1980s, and the daughter tells her mother she plans to kill herself that night. When I walked into the black box theater at AS220 I was welcomed directly into a small apartment set that was so detailed I spent several minutes silent while others chatted around me. I've worked as a properties manager before, so I know how much work goes into each individual item that makes it onto a set. This space was far from just a set, though, it was a recreation of artistic director Ted Clements' grandmother's home. There were dishes in the dryer by a real sink, salt and pepper on the table and a working clock on the wall. Every cabinet and drawer that was opened during the show was filled with the expected items in a real kitchen, and far from all of them were used. This attention to detail immediately made this production feel like I was looking in on a real moment between the two leading women.

The mother, Thelma, played by Becky Minard, is hard but sympathetic. She clearly has love for her daughter, but struggles to find the right words to say when faced with such a shocking conversation. Minard's performance was astounding. She seamlessly works through fear, anger, disappointment and confusion, giving each emotion its due. The way she pulls in the audience like they are with her in her desperation to talk her child out of this decision is masterful. I was particularly engaged in watching her face, as she does some very impressive and subtle acting just with her eyes. In a role that could so easily be played over-the-top, she was instead powerful and restrained, creating space for the audience to join her.

Daughter Jessie, portrayed by Audrey Lavin Crawley, is resolute from the moment she speaks her intentions aloud. Just as she tells her mother what she plans to do with her father's old gun, a soft ticking of a clock can be heard. Lavin Crawley is grounded and willful and never turns to dramatics to get across her despair. She calmly fills jars with candy and cleans up around the apartment like she is within a normal evening with her mother. The calm that Lavin Crawley exhibits allows for the room to breathe and really listen; this performance is far from quiet, though, she is a force. At times I found myself understanding completely why she felt she should kill herself just as someone would explain why they chose anything in their life. This made the moments when Thelma came raging back against her plan so poignant.

The relationship director Valerie Remillard uncovered between these two women is remarkable. To somehow be rooting for both to get what they need in spite of them being very far apart is complex and expertly done. About taking on this show, Remillard said, "It was important to me that I didn't glorify the subject." She pointed out that in the '80s and even today in rural areas, there are not resources for people to turn to if they have feelings of wanting to end their own life. What happens when there is no help? Exploring this through theater is important, even if at times difficult. Sitting in that apartment with these characters at this exact moment in their lives is uncomfortable, but it is impossible to look away. Wanting to know what Thelma can say to stop Jessie from resorting to the worst case scenario becomes all-consuming. The ticking in the background clicks on and it feels like a race against the clock.

So does a play like this glorify suicide? I would say definitively, no. What it does instead is force its audience to look at the darkness, to go deep into the uncomfortable place that we have all wondered about and rarely explored. In going at this subject matter head-on, it shows the realities of it, and takes out all of the glorification. If I were to only hear this beautiful and harrowing script one time, Counter-

Productions was the right place to do it, I can only call this performance one thing: flawless.

Night Mother runs through Nov 25 at Counter-Productions Theatre Company, AS220 Blackbox Theatre, 95 Empire St, PVD. For tickets, brownpapertickets.com

[Struggle at Home: Watch on the Rhine](#) [explores conflicting political leanings within](#) [one household](#)



Watch on the Rhine, written in 1941 by Lillian Hellman (and winner of the New York Drama Critic' Circle Award in the same year) is a perfect combination of drama, old-fashioned comedy and historical storytelling.

The audience is seated in an intimate and well-to-do living room. Pillows and blankets are in the seats so you feel a guest in the home of the Farrellys, a wealthy family living in Washington, DC, in the 1940s. Mother Fanny (Paula Faber) lives with her son, David (Ian Hudgins), and they are eagerly anticipating the arrival of daughter Sara (Eden Casteel) with her family after her 20 years living in Europe. Also in the home are the shadowy houseguests The Count Teck de Brancovis (Charles Lafond) and his wife Marthe de Brancovis (Christine Pavao). Upon the arrival of Sara; her husband Kurt Mueller (Andrew Stigler); and their three children Joshua (Ezra Jordan), Babette (Emma Sheldon) and Bodo (Jack Sheldon), we begin to learn of their time spent during the war. Clues of Kurt's role in an anti-fascist movement are sprinkled throughout the house and it has Count Teck questioning on which side the Muellers stood.

The matriarch, Mother Fanny, opens Act One with vulnerability, but does not let that detract from her sheer force. She commands the stage and wisely shows her emotional hand as a means to draw in the audience. Faber is raw, deeply talented and difficult not to watch when she is in the room.

The man of the house since his father's passing is David. Hudgins plays perfectly opposite the strong Faber. Without stepping on the toes of a moment, he is strapping and powerful with an ability to charm both the audience and his married houseguest, Countess Marthe. The relationships Hudgins creates with his family and love interest are authentic and warm; he is the safety everyone seeks, yet he is

never too brash to achieve this authority.

Some of the most fun of this show is in the connections. The flirtation between Hudgins and Pavao is divine, as is the tumultuous relationship between Lafond and Pavao. Pavao brings truth and sincerity to every role; she has a way of never acting and instead just being, which takes the show from the pages. Pavao is casual yet urgent, kind yet fierce, and she makes her craft look effortless. Lafond is the perfect villain; his smirks, knowing stares and dominance of a room create the necessary tension to grip viewers. The love that passes between Casteel and Stigler are some of the strongest breaks from the tension. The storyline of a daughter leaving her home for 20 years makes sense when you see the way Stigler looks at his lifelong companion. There's a sense of equality and respect in the marriage, an uncommonly touching rapport in a time when men were usually "in charge."

Daughter, sister and wife, Casteel plays her role brilliantly as the glue of this cast. She is breathtaking from the first time she enters the room in her bright red coat. Her storyline is the most complex; she must navigate seeing her family for the first time in 20 years, worrying about her husband and remaining calm and collected for her children. Casteel has a special way about her in this performance. Her emotions are easily read even when the spotlight is on someone else, and she drives the action forward by helping the audience react with her. Her husband is in clear danger of being killed as Count Teck begins to suspect he and Kurt are on opposing political sides, but Casteel grounds the show and brings comfort by sacrificing her own peace of mind.

The play is performed in three acts, which can sound daunting, but every time the lights go to black signaling an intermission, it feels like only a few minutes passed. Acts One and Two build quickly and the script and performances are utterly engrossing. Act Three is the payoff act, with climactic interactions and major revelations, yet I was left wanting just a bit more after the action. Act Three felt like it needed a longer explanation of what this family will feel in the turmoil's aftermath. It is a testament to the all-star cast that the story feels incomplete; wanting more of each relationship speaks to the depth created in them.

The younger members of the cast add levity to the tumultuous home, and many of the best comedic moments come from Jack Sheldon, who has a true talent for one liners. The balance this show has for light-heartedness and intensity makes for a worthwhile night at the theater. The direction by artistic director Rebecca Maxfield shows great attention to detail and a clear understanding of how to draw the best from each of her actors. There may be a million shows playing right now, but prioritize this one.

Head Trick Theatre's Watch on the Rhine plays through Oct 21 at AS220's Black Box Theatre, 95 Empire St, PVD. For info, go to headtricktheatre.org

[CTC's The Father Creates Community Around a Harrowing Disease](#)



My heart soars when I see a show that feels important. Word of mouth is the best marketing any show can get and sometimes a show leaves me not just feeling like I want to tell people about it, but rather to demand they see it due to its power. *The Father*, a play originally written by young French novelist-turned-playwright Florian Zeller and translated by Christopher Hampton, is a show with so much weight and significance that the night I went, every single audience member remained in their seats for the talkback afterward. One gentleman even revealed that he had been both nights that opening weekend because, after the first night, he was left needing to see the story told again. The show was originally performed in Paris in 2012 and won the Molière Awards for Best Play in 2014. It has since been adapted for stages in England, New York, Australia and Singapore, receiving critical acclaim each time.

The stunning script and impressive direction by Ryan Sekac weaves through the emotional experience of a man diagnosed with dementia. Players come in and out of his storyline and the audience starts to question what is real and what they can recall as though in the mind of the father. Thanks to very clear staging one can suddenly understand first hand what it must be like to live with this harrowing disease. Scenes repeat and are rewritten, the timeline is unstable, yet we are always right there, gripped by the moment at hand. Even the set pieces are used to further a visual understanding of the emotions involved. Stage manager Reed Reed enters and quietly moves items, slowly and subtly taking the audience outside the setting they first sat down in and leaving them in a startling and unfamiliar space.

In the title role, Terry Simpson plays the father artfully; he is a protagonist who requires much heart

and equal frustration. He continually tries to place where he is and what is happening around him. It is a demanding undertaking for an actor, yet Simpson is exactly on point and inspires so much love toward a father who is oftentimes erratic, moody, exasperating and even scary. The places that he allows us to follow him in this performance are vulnerable and heartbreaking. Simpson plays with finesse, care and command the man and the shell of the man who is left after the disease has taken over many of his original personal characteristics.

Tammy Brown plays the daughter Anne, who jockeys for compassion opposite her father, and who is arguably the opposing lead in the show. Oftentimes this position requires Brown to play the authority over her ill parent and she handles it with a grounded calm that reads as both strong and fragile in the moments needed. The exasperation with her difficult situation comes across with so much tenderness in Brown's performance that I felt I was with her every time a new and increasingly harrowing choice was placed before her for her dad's care.

Other roles in the show are shifting, with one character sometimes being interpreted by multiple actors. Maggie Cady plays "woman" and every persona she takes on, large or small, she draws the focus to her compassionate depictions. She is particularly skillful at connecting with the other actors on stage and every relationship she creates is beautiful. Ricco Lanni, playing the part of Pierre, the son-in-law, is powerful and dark as he has to manage being both compassionate to his wife and father-in-law's situation and also show the toll it can all take on a family unit. Lanni is straightforward and authoritative in his portrayal and, even at the height of the drama, he allows space for the audience to sympathize with his character's difficult position in the household. Rounding out the cast is Laura Kennedy and Max Leatham as Laura and "man." Kennedy is particularly charming and bold in her impressive scenes as a nurse struggling to aid the stricken father.

The story isn't told from one viewpoint and, by the end, there is sympathy and understanding of what the diagnosed, the caregivers and other family members go through. I felt I could truly place myself in the shoes of every person represented in the show and it left me altered. I was so relieved that there was a talkback, which they have wisely scheduled for after every performance. Audience members, one by one, opened up about personal struggles with Alzheimer's or dementia in their families and discussions about care, trauma and understanding were opened up. A representative from the Alzheimer's Association of RI was there and spoke of how important it is for dialogues about these diseases to become more frequent. She said that oftentimes funding for research and care directly correlate to public awareness. I was most struck by the fact that it seemed that every person in the audience had experience in their own lives. There were tears and incredibly personal things shared, but there was a magic in the connections made that night thanks to this show. I can understand someone going through these struggles directly, not wanting to delve into the subject on an evening at the theater, but I would urge everyone to go, even though it is heavy material. This production is handled with such care and intention that I left feeling connected, supported, enlightened and hopeful. I have always known Contemporary Theatre Company as one of the most open and positive groups in the state and their communications director (and aforementioned actor in this show) Maggie Cady, said of their mission in the talkback, "We are about bringing the community together and starting conversations." This show expertly accomplishes that goal and then some.

The Father is showing in the outside garden patio at Contemporary Theater Company September 28-29, October 4-5, at 7pm and September 30 at 2pm. Performances will be moved inside in case of rain.