

Social Creatures at Trinity Rep



SOCIAL CREATURES

Trinity Rep's new horror play about society is interesting and ambitious. It challenges us to think about what trade-offs we make in order to be members of society, but shies away from ever making us truly horrified by the results.

The apocalypse has come and people have organized into two groups: those living inside and those wandering outside. In a large abandoned building, six individuals reluctantly dwell together. For survival reasons, their conversation is always formal, almost exclusively revolving around obtaining necessities or fixing equipment. "Is the generator fixed?" "Who stole cans from the pantry?" Mrs. Williams (Nance Williamson) is constantly at odds with Mrs. Wilson (Janice Duclos), who pilfers canned goods from time to time. The other inhabitants are Mr. Johnson (Timothy Crowe), a cantankerous old man to whom Mrs. Williams often looks for help, Mrs. Smith (Rebecca Gibel), a dreamer, Mr. Jones (Alexander Platt) and Mrs. Jones (D'Arcy Dersham). Playwright Jackie Sibbles gives a nod to George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* by writing in Mr. Brown (Darrien Battle), an African-American drifter looking for safe haven. Brown's appearance and subsequent quarantine provide a target for the group to vent their repressed personal wants.

Eventually, tensions escalate to a point where bloodshed is inevitable. Unfortunately, Sibbles and production director Laura Smith never let us experience this point as a powerful unsettling moment. What we get instead is a splatter scene played for laughs.

Sibbles and Smith do better in the revealing character moments department. For instance, during one of the character monologues, conveyed via stage monitors, Mrs. Smith laments losing a guitar she once owned. As she reaches a hand toward the monitor in darkness, her spoken line, "I love that guitar," loops abruptly into, "I love, I love, love, I love..." ad infinitum through fade out.

Social Creatures runs through April 21. 201 Washington Street, Providence. 351-4242, www.trinityrep.com.