

February 13 - 28, 2004

**The Pavilion**

Reviewed February 13

Running Time 1 hour 40 minutes

The region's community theater premiere of Craig Wright's lovely, lyrical play about time, the consequences of mistakes and the desire to fix the unfixable is a solid production with a great deal to like. Wright provides a collection of observations to be pondered within an absorbing and entertaining framework. While not all the notes this production hits are exactly on key, there are elements to savor and the overall effect is warm and satisfying. The play calls for a cast of three although there are eighteen named characters: the leading man, the leading woman and the narrator who also plays sixteen different people who appear on the dock at The Pavilion. Chuck Dluhy clearly revels in this opportunity to jump from character to character in a bravura performance.



**Storyline: The twentieth reunion of the Pine City, Minnesota High School class of 1982 is being held at the old wooden pavilion down by the lake. Kari and Peter were the best looking couple of their senior class but are now seeing each other for the first time since he abandoned her and fled for college. Now, she's unhappily married and and he's unhappily unmarried. He wants her to leave her husband and seek happiness with him.**

Andrew S. Greenleaf and Barbara Raffaele play the couple, and each is warmly human and totally credible. Raffaele lets her character emerge slowly throughout the evening, softening her edges under the influence of the arguments of friends, entreaties of her former boyfriend and a glass or two of champagne. Greenleaf's take on the boyfriend, on the other hand, goes the opposite direction throughout the evening. He arrived with a goal (getting back together with her) and tries multiple approaches to the same end. While she's mellowing somewhat, he is escalating his effort to overcome her resistance as he feels time running out on his one chance to correct the error that he believes ruined both their lives. As individuals they are interesting and believable, while as a couple, there is a very real spark of chemistry between them.

Chuck Dluhy's parade of characters is also very good. He's the former friends of the boy, girlfriends of the girl, town officials and other classmates. Its an opportunity for a talented actor to create a string of interesting and amusing mini-portraits and he makes the most of it. In each of those smaller parts his touch is sure, but his approach to the major character, the narrator, is a bit shaky as he imbues him with a darker nature that puts a strangely negative spin on some of the more lyrical and more philosophical message of the playwright. The narrator has some of the most interesting things to say. Early in the first act, for instance, the narrator informs the audience that "this is a play about time" and, offers a number of cogent observations about the quality of time, eternity, creation and the balance of nature.

In a television interview promoting this production Wright explained that a main point was that time only goes in one direction, that you can't go back and unmake an error and you have to work with the past you have. That wholesome message is somewhat obscured by Dluhy's dark delivery. It is clear from Jeffrey Scott Auerbach's lighting that this is not Dluhy's exclusive take on the role. Lit from below with dark circles for eyes, the impression approaches a Halloween effect and some of the other lighting effects seem overly harsh and stark as well.

*Written by Craig Wright. Directed by Chuck Whalen. Design: Joe Schubert and Chuck Whalen (set) Jeffrey Scott Auerbach (lights) Anna Hawkins (sound) Doug Olmstead (photography) J. Arthur Rodger (stage manager). Cast: Chuck Dluhy, Andrew S. Greenleaf, Barbara Raffaele.*