

BWW Reviews: Bravo to Peninsula Players for Producing A REAL LULU

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By **Peggy Sue Dunigan** posted June 26, 2015 12:40 p.m.



From left Sean Fortunato, Erin Noel Grennan and Greg Vinkler.

Door County's Peninsula Players Theatre (PPT) celebrates their 80th season with an exceptional world premiere *A Real Lulu*. Written by former PPT actor who is currently featured on Broadway in *Finding Neverland*, Paul Slade Smith crafted a timely production overflowing with clever plot twists reflecting the contemporary political climate with class and humor. The two act evening highlights the acting talents of a seven person cast, and especially Greg Vinkler, playing Ned Newley, and Erin Noel Grennan, in the role of Louise Peaks.

Vinkler's Ned Newley captures the indescribable foibles of Vermont's Lieutenant Governor who ascends to the higher office when the Governor resigns due to a sex scandal. While Newley completely excels at the inner workings of Vermont's government because he actually "ran the state, while the former governor played at the publicity," Newley has a personality extremely inept at handling the political campaigns and public speaking, including a comic ability to mumble when he's nervous, to win over the state's constitu-

ency, the only state that requires a formal election when an official resigns instead of automatically taking over the office, or governorship.

Newley's faithful staff of one a likeable Dave Riley, played by an accomplished Sean Fortunato, calls in a political pollster Paige, a delightful Katherine Keberlein, and a CNN political analyst Arthur Vance, a confident and funny Brady Armacost, to bolster and train Newley in the political ways of the world. Enter Grennan with aplomb playing Louise Peaks, an administrative temp who has never stayed at any job longer than a day, and feels completely at ease telling the new governor her mind when she says, "We both don't know what we're doing," and together they may actually be clueless about what their new positions require. When Newley and Peaks meet, a fresh political team inadvertently joins their hands and careers so grand mayhem ensues.

Vinkler and Grennan turn in stunning performances presenting nuanced, likeable characters touching the audience under the adroit direction of Tom Mula. Their supporting cast includes a wonderful cameo by Neal Friedman in the role of a very quiet cameraman A.C., who eventually opens up his life to the new governor as they plan for several television appearances. These spectacular performances play to Smith's intelligent, well-written play with enough quirks and surprises to keep the politics fresh. A play filled with humor that resonates from the character's unique personalities and situations over a two day time period that sparkles in Scenic Designer Sarah E. Ross's regal New England Governor's office, complete with a side balcony where the characters can escape.

Throughout the play, top politicians and pundits discuss what constitutes a "real" candidate and elected official, what Vermont's 'people' expect and want from their Governor, and more important, what is the purpose of government and what does the institution actually do. Or why do people wish to be elected to an office, either as a second hand man, a Lieutenant Governor, or the person in the hot seat and media's eye, the Governor?

PPT's *A Real Lulu* examines the modern political climate and media, an often complex process, from a personal, understandable perspective. for a near perfect evening of entertainment suited to the upcoming presidential election on the horizon. Visit Peninsula Players on their shores where beautiful sunsets rise over the Door County horizon and theatre to experience this outstanding new play, one that will make the audience laugh and then rethink their approach to government. Applaud the company's efforts to sponsor new plays--*A Real Lulu*---intellectual and stimulating comedy that will send the audience home laughing and sighing simultaneously about their own state's government with either admiration or peculiar amazement.

Peninsula Players Theatre presents Paul Slade Smith's A Real Lulu in Fish Creek through July 5 at their Theatre in the Garden.

For information on performances and tickets, please call

920.868.3287 or visit www.peninsulaplayers.com