

The Tin Woman *Finds A Heart*

- By [Peggy Sue Dunigan](#) / Tuesday, June 24, 2014 02:31 pm <http://doorcountytoday.com/blog-20914-the-tin-woman-finds-a-heart.html>

In the waning light of a sunset over the Green Bay shoreline, [Peninsula Players](#) opened its 79th season with Sean Grennan's World Premiere *The Tin Woman*.

Sean Grennan's play, directed by Tom Mula, imagines the story of Joy, a woman in her mid-30's who has received a heart transplant from a young man named Jack, almost exactly her age. The premiere production sets up an interesting scenario evolving over approximately eight months: from Joy's recovery in the hospital, adjusting to her anti-rejection medication and her ability to confront her depression while she strengthens her health. Grennan attempts to delve into these crucial after-effects on the heart recipient and the donor's family within one evening's time, a formidable task.

Erin Noel Grennan accepts the challenge in playing Joy and the complex set of emotions that she confronts over this time period, especially why was she saved after someone else has died? When Joy reaches out to Jack's family and they ask her to visit, the repercussions ripple through each character's life, involving Jack's parents, Hank (Joel Hatch) and Alice (Kristine Thatcher), and Jack's sister Sammy (Erica Elam). Darla (Carol Kuykendall), a friend and co-worker, also tries to assist Joy through this trying time while Jack's body and spirit (Matt Holzfeind) hovers over various scenes, close to each character as he appears to wait for his heart in Joy's body to find some resolution both in her life and his family's lives.

These concepts weigh heavily, of course, and Grennan catches the nuances in these life changing events. The audience may wish they could discover more about Joy, her upbringing, her dreams or why she disconnects from men, than the play divulges. But Jack's relationships with his father and sister develop more clearly in scenes that speak volumes in some of the performance's shining moments.

While Thatcher and Hatch portray Jack's grieving parents with realistic humor, sparked with amusing quips that ring true, Elam adds an affectionate, quirky personality to Sammy.

There are more than 3,500 hearts transplanted annually. Survivors live anywhere from 15-30 years afterwards, although anxiety and depression often surface during the recovery, as recipients are faced with the realization that someone needed to die for them to live. And, of course, the donor's families may believe that their loved one lives on through the donor.

The loss of a child represents one of life's most traumatic events, at whatever age. Some parents never fully recover from the grieving process. Grennan's play touches on this indescribable grief, although the script leaves the audience wanting more about these likable characters.

Lighting designer Stephen Roy White and Scenic Designer Sarah E. Ross give the audience a transcendent set, helping the actors move seamlessly between Joy's apartment and Jack's family home. The multi-level set enhances the action while atmospheric lighting implies the metaphysical and spiritual nature of this production.

Enjoy [Peninsula Players'](#) *The Tin Woman* through July 6, and travel its heartfelt road.

[Peninsula Players Theatre](#) in the "Theatre in a Garden" presents Sean Grennan's *The Tin Woman* through July 6. For information or tickets, call 920.868.3287 or visit www.peninsulaplayers.com.



Matt Holzfeind, Carol Kuykendall and Erin Noel Grennan in Sean Grennan's *The Tin Woman* now on stage at Peninsula Players.