

The Revenant Culture

Theatre Review of The Warehouse Theatre's production of ALMOST, MAINE.

From Stephanie Young

I am not a fan of gushing. Actually, I despise it. I like to see something added to this great conversation that is theatre, and I prefer a thoughtful, encouraging tone to the cheerleader-esque “You must see this, it's, like, so totally awesome, and I may or may not have been pad to say so” blather. But those sentiments have been thoroughly pummeled out of me by [Warehouse Theatre's](#) latest show: John Cariani's “Almost, Maine.” The happy fact of the matter is, I don't think I can add anything to this masterful production. So without reserve, with great excitement, and with only a slight hint of Valley Girl inflection, I will here say, *You've Got to See This Show!* It deserves the highest praise I know to give to a piece of theatre—It is alive.

Cariani's dialogue is crackling—funnier than anything I've heard in a long time, and *intelligent*, to boot. I believed every word the four (only four!) actors spoke on that stage—which is a stunning accomplishment given the bizarre situations in which these characters find themselves. Even the travel brochures insist that they are a different breed of people. People who let strangers camp out on their lawns. People who have a bad habit of misspelling their tattoos, and who may or may not be able to fix all nineteen pieces of your broken heart.

They're all from northern Maine, see. Way-way-way northern Maine. So North, and so cold, and so tiny that they aren't even a township. They're almost organized enough, they're almost united enough to make up a real town, but not quite. And “almost” turns out to be the metaphor for all of these people—for their sundry attempts at connecting with each other. For their givings and misgivings, fallings in and out of love.

You see, they aren't *really* another breed. They are you and me and our loves and almost-loves. Which doesn't mean they are syrupy--they go through pain like you and I. They just go through it in a most unusual manner (an ironing board? A big red sack full of love?), and it's almost always funny. Almost always.

That sort of dexterity—the funny and painful and poignant all rolled up together in something so real you swear you've seen it all before . . . in yourself—that sort of acting gymnastics deserves a standing ovation. I can't single out any one actor, or even any of the nineteen characters they portrayed. Debra Capps, Adam Critchlow, Jason M. Shipman, and Anne Tromsness—they made each character a living, breathing person, and they all have my deepest respect for the work they did last night.

Other respectable persons include the designers, David Hartman (scene), Tony Penna (Lights), Kevin Frazier (Sound), Jayce Tromsness (Costumes). The opening ahhhh, the perfect, perky music, the brilliant lights, the furious costume changes off (and on!) the stage—the show was seamless and beautiful. Ah, me. Forgive the gushing, but Director Chip Egan really does deserve

something for pulling all of this together—maybe, he could direct a few more shows in Greenville?

I'd pay to see them. In fact, I, the obnoxious person who gave you this high school pep rally in which you learned next to nothing, I am currently finagling my almost non-existent finances into letting me see “Almost, Maine” again—something I've done only one other time in my eight years of theatre. In today's economy, that's no small investment—not even almost. But it will be worth every penny.

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