



When the working day is done

TOTR cast has fun with contemporary farce

Madcap comedies are a stock in trade at community theaters everywhere, and for good reason. As the current production of *Girls' Weekend*, by Karen Schaeffer, at Theatre on the Ridge demonstrates, farce is funny—if it's done well.

by
Robert Speer
roberts@
newsreview.com

Review:
Girls' Weekend shows
Thursday-Saturday,
7:30 p.m. and Sunday,
2 p.m., through Feb. 9.
Tickets: \$12-\$16

**Theatre on
the Ridge**
3735 Neal Road,
Paradise
877-5760
totr.org

As with all farces, the setup takes some time to evolve. It begins when four women, three of whom are members of an Iowa book club, arrive at a north-woods Minnesota cabin during an unseasonable snowstorm.

Their plan is to have a getaway weekend during which they'll share some laughs and talk about the latest book they're reading. Judging by the cases of wine they lug in from the car and their eagerness to uncork the chardonnay, that goal is entirely fun-gible. These "girls" just want to have fun.

Instead of talking about the book, they end up talking about ... well, men. And relationships with same. Sure enough, men start showing up at the cabin, despite the "no men allowed" rule of the girls' getaway.

The first to arrive is Rick (Eric Ricketts), who has driven his wife, Carol (Erika Anne Soerensen), to the cabin. The couple have been trying for months to get pregnant, and Carol has been monitoring her temperature for the best "window of opportunity." For his part, Rick is hoping desperately that the "time is right" for a quicky.

Carol sends him on his way, only to call him back

later when the thermometer tells her she's ovulating. She tells him to hide in the shed, and that she'll flick the porch light three times when everybody's gone to bed.

Meanwhile, the recently widowed Meg (Teresa Hurley-Miller) is having a secret affair with Dot's son Stephen (Denver Nash), who shows up hoping to carry on their romance. Meg doesn't want Dot to learn about the affair and tells Stephen to wait in the boathouse until he sees her porch light signal.

Meanwhile, Ellie (Sarah Brown), Meg's daughter, isn't interested in hanging with her mom's friends and strikes up a relationship with Bubbah (Jeff Hohimer), a townie who agrees to wait in the barn for her porch light signal to put up a ladder to her window so she can sneak out and they can go barhopping in town together.

Three freezing men waiting for the porch light to flicker: What could possibly go wrong?

Leave it to Dot (Sue Ruttenburg). This child of the 1960s wants only to stay up late and party, which of course means that the other women's secret schemes can't proceed. So they ply her with booze until she passes out, face down in a plate of spaghetti, and then hide her in a closet.

Mayhem and madness ensue as all the plot lines converge, with much madcap door slamming, hidden bodies and general craziness that keeps the audience in stitches. The arrival of Sheriff Tom (Jerry Miller) only adds to the fun.

Girls' Weekend is well staged in every way, but special credit should go to Jerry Miller, who designed the elaborate set with its many doors and a window looking out on a snowstorm.

The play, which is directed by Judy Clemens, opens TOTR's 45th season, a remarkable benchmark given the challenges the theater has faced in Paradise, especially recently. Nobody has contributed more to that success than Clemens, the current executive director and all-around leader of the troupe.

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