

VOLUNTEER WITH THE RENO POLICE DEPT.



Act As Extra "Eyes and Ears" For The Reno Police

- We have immediate openings in our Senior Volunteer Program
- If you're at least 50 years old and have a Nevada Drivers License you can apply
- Patrol residential areas and shopping malls within the City of Reno

For More Information Visit:

RenoPD.com/SAVE

To Request an Application Call:

(775) 348-6925

ART OF THE STATE

BY JESSICA SANTINA



The Foreigner will be at Reno Little Theater until June 16.

PHOTO/ERIC MARKS

Stranger danger

The night I caught a sneak preview performance of Larry Shue's 1984 play *The Foreigner* at Reno Little Theater, I was surrounded by an uproarious crowd while I sat scratching my head.

I'm not alone as a critic. It turns out *The Foreigner* has always been one of those odd plays—beloved by audiences and disliked by critics, who have called it "contrived," with "convoluted shenanigans" and a script that's "patronizing."

This flimsy farce about Americans' fear of The Other is all those things. But it's also funny, mainly thanks to a few performances done well.

Sergeant "Froggy" LeSueur (Keith Roberts) is a cockney English military man who arranges a three-day getaway for his grieving pal, Charlie Baker (Scott Hernandez), whose dying, adulterous wife insisted he leave because he's too boring. So, obviously, Froggy brings him to a remote fishing cabin in rural Georgia. A little TLC from the cabin's proprietor, Betty (Moir Bengochea), and some pleasant conversation should fix him right up.

But socially awkward Charlie disagrees. "Even idle conversation terrifies me," he urges. Froggy promises to fix it.

Poor Betty, approaching her twilight years in this nearly condemned cabin, mourns the life she'll never have of visiting distant lands and meeting foreign strangers. Froggy's solution lands right in his lap. It's Betty's lucky day, he says. He just happens to have brought a foreigner, his friend Cha-Oo-Lee (Charlie, for short) to stay. He's great, but don't bother talking to him, Froggy warns; he doesn't speak a word of English.

It's this feeble hook upon which hangs the entire two-and-a-half-hour play. Charlie, initially repelled by the plan, must follow it when Betty begins, like a predictable cliché, shouting slowly at Charlie as if he's hard of hearing. The story's single note now becomes how stupid Americans act when they meet foreigners.

Soon the Rev. David Marshall Lee (Bradly Howell); his Southern belle wife, Catherine (Anna Pidlypchak); and David's hillbilly pal, Owen (Bob Gabrielli), proceed to air all kinds of dirty laundry in front of Charlie, a perceived non-threat. Charlie's in too deep now; he has no choice but to quickly "learn" English from Catherine's dimwitted brother Ellard (Patrick McCarty) and extract himself from this uncomfortable situation. But things escalate rapidly when racism and xenophobia rear their ugly heads and the Klan gets involved (wait ... what?) in a moment that left me squirming in my seat.

But like I said, it's saved by performances done well—namely Hernandez's deadpan Charlie, who thrives in this scenario where he seems to be "acquiring a personality" and pulls off an accent reminiscent of Andy Kaufman's Latka from *Taxi* as well as responsive facial expressions that, on their own, earn the show's biggest laughs. Also, despite Shue's simplistic portrayal of Betty, Bengochea's talent turns her into a lovably funny, if daft, character.

Less lovable are the accents—having grown up in the South, I found all the Southern accents unbelievable, cartoonish and grating, while Froggy's cockney accent was virtually impossible to understand. And, unfortunately, not all performances survive Shue's scripting.

Though the play touches on some regrettably current and important themes, this ultimately is a comedy best enjoyed if you check your brain at the door. □

The Foreigner



The Foreigner—written by Larry Shue and directed by Rod Hearn—is at Reno Little Theater, 147 E. Pueblo St., through June 16. Showtimes include May 30, 31; and June 1, 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15 at 7:30 p.m.; Additional matinees take place June 2, 9, 16 at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$25 for adults, \$20 seniors and military and \$15 students for students. For information and to purchase tickets, visit renolittletheater.org or call 813-8900.

Let your imagination run wild at The Lucky Childe

The creative cafe
where families can
eat, learn, & play.
\$20 Gift Certificate
YOU PAY \$8



THE LUCKY
CHILDE

RN&R
sweetdeals

Purchase at the RN&R office: 760 Margrave Drive Ste 100
or online: <https://rnsweetdeals.newsreview.com>