



ILLUSTRATION BY MARK STIVERS



OFF MENU

B (Street) is for brunch

BY MAXFIELD MORRIS / maxfieldm@newsreview.com

You don't know what you've been missing until you've tried it—then the world's never quite the same.

Since July 2018, B Street Theatre has been putting on monthly Boozy New Play Brunches. Company actors perform staged readings of new scripts while audiences chow down on some freshly ironed waffles while sipping bottomless mimosas. The price tag of the Sunday morning experience is \$12, which B Street Associate Artistic Director Lyndsay Burch says helps draw in newcomers.

"It's kind of like a gateway," Burch said. "It's a cheaper ticket and it's a fun thing to do on a Sunday morning."

B Street is in the acting business, not the food service industry—but the mimosas and waffles help make the experience more inviting, easing the path to an untested, unpolished play.

The theater company wanted a way to try out interesting plays, Burch says, and this is the idea she came up with. The brunch also lets

playwrights see how audiences react to their scripts.

April's production was *The Great Race of Clearwater Wood: The True Story of the Tortoise and the Hare*, written by company member Peter Story. Stacked with an intimidating contingent of a dozen actors performing a work of children's theater for a room full of tipsy adults, the reading was two hoots and a bunch of hollers.

Without a set, costumes or props, pantomime filled out the story, and though there was limited rehearsal time, great performances helped the witty, classy script shine.

"That's actually what the audience is there to experience," Burch said. "They're there to be a part of the process for the playwright and the actors and the director."

As Burch pointed out, B Street's Family Series is designed to be appreciated by all ages, and this was no exception. Playing off a bunch of '80s movie tropes, the play was unironically enjoyable, and landed well on an almost

all-adult crowd. Mimosas pair well with children's theater.

After the play was finished, Burch and Story opened the floor for audience feedback and reactions; Story mentioned he was looking for ways to reduce the cast size.

Some viewers were concerned about sexuality in the play, some marveled at the depth of the social issues contained in a classic story. One person suggested that the roles of the band could be eliminated or double cast—to which a wounded Rick Kleber, who played one of the band members, replied, "Thanks, Mom."

It's far from your typical brunch, and allows both audiences and B Street to grab a bite of new theater. And as Burch said, "New work is best served when the playwright is able to hear it in front of an audience."

This month's brunch is on May 26 at 11 a.m. and features a reading of *Unite The Right/A Black Comedy* by Sam Kebede. Tickets are \$12. Visit bstreettheatre.org.

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