

Fox Valley Repertory debuts with family vacation comedy

By Randall G. Mielke For Sun-Times Media Jan 13, 2011 12:32PM

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Left to right, Katherine Banks, Diane Dorsey, Alex Goodrich and Don Forsto star in “Leaving Iowa,” at the new Fox Valley Repertory Company at Pheasant Run Jan. 20. | Photo courtesy of Trademan Photography

Leaving Iowa

When: Jan. 20 to March 13; 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays; 2 p.m. Sundays Weekday matinees are at 2 p.m. on Jan. 20 and 27; Feb. 3; and 17; and March 10

Where: Pheasant Run Resort & Spa, 4051 E. Main St., St. Charles

How Much: \$29 on Thursdays and Fridays; \$39 on Saturdays and Sundays

Contact: 630-584-6342 or visit www.ticketmaster.com

“Leaving Iowa” is Fox Valley Repertory director Rachel Rockwell’s kind of show.

“I like to tell genuine stories about people’s emotional journeys,” Rockwell said. “This play is perfect for that.”

“Leaving Iowa” is being presented by the newly-named Fox Valley Repertory (formerly Noble Fool Theatricals) at the Pheasant Run Resort & Spa in St. Charles from Jan. 20 to March 13.

Written by Midwesterns Tim Clue and Spike Manton, this touching comedy centers on middle-aged writer Don Browning, who is searching for the perfect spot to scatter his father’s ashes. As he travels the paths his family took on their annual vacations, images of his father and the shared family tortures impact his memories.

“The show is about road trips that you take with your family,” Rockwell said. “The play flashes back and forth between the past and the present. The son takes his father’s ashes and has to find an

appropriate place to put his father. So the play flashes back to when his father was still alive and the road trips they took as a family of four.

“I think the appeal of the play is that it is really universal,” Rockwell continued. “People can identify with this piece. It is one of the funniest scripts I have ever read; then it gets tender. And it is all very true.”

But staging a play that is “on the road” poses some challenges.

“The flashback scenes almost always take place in the car,” Rockwell said. “The car is abstracted; it is a suggestion of a car. There are two chairs for front seats and then two stools behind them, which are higher — plus a steering wheel. And we do a lot of projection on the screens to give a sense of time and place.”

In the flashback scenes, the family of four encounter several “characters” on their journeys.

“There are six actors and actresses in the show,” Rockwell said, “and the four main characters are Mom (Diane Dorsey), Dad (Don Forsten), brother (Alex Goodrich) and sister (Katherine Banks), but another actor and actress play everyone else.”

The other actor and actress, Sean Patrick Fawcett and Anna Carini, play 22 other characters in the show ranging from “a guy at the grocery store” to “a Civil War re-enactment person.”

“You can’t judge yourself when you are acting and doing comedy,” Rockwell said. “These two are really brave in their performances.”

In addition to the show’s humor, Rockwell believes the play has underlying messages.

“You never really appreciate the moments of your life when you are having them when you are young,” she said about the meaning of the play. “You have to embrace all the positive qualities of who your parents were and enjoy the time that you have. What I wouldn’t give now to have one of my family road trips for one more day.”

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