

Road trip comedy has holiday-tinged fun for everyone

By KATHLEEN PALMER

Staff Writer

Luckily for this arts and entertainment writer, this is not a play about baseball.

"Going to See the Kid," the latest offering at Merrimack Repertory Theatre in Lowell, Mass., is technically about doing just that – two Boston Globe writers taking the Fenway-to-Florida drive to interview baseball great Ted Williams in 2001. But it's less about the destination than it is about the journey, as most things are.

Simon, the older "Lifestyles" writer (played by Joel Colodner)

has been teamed up with young female sports writer, Ellis (Veronika Duerr), to deliver a unique collaborative story on the Splendid Splinter himself, by driving to Florida, along with Ellis' husband David (John Gregorio).

The personality disparities between Simon and Ellis, as well as David's

peacekeeping endeavors, make for pretty nonstop laughs. As Ellis (named after Ellis Kinder, Red Sox relief pitcher circa Ted Williams' day) breaks the fourth wall to narrate her frustrations during the trip and spout Red Sox stats, Simon quotes T.S. Eliot and insists on turning their junket into a cultural tour. Her Saugus accent and his British one "accentuate" their differences as well. David tries to finish his dissertation in the back seat while keeping the two from each

other's throats.

Ellis is hanging her whole career advancement on this one big story – not the least of

things weighing on her is her pregnancy (her "Mookie/Buckner" joke about that was the only sports joke this A&E writer got) and her father battling illness back at home. Duerr plays her scrappy and earnest, a devoted Sox fan ("short for 'fanatic,'" Simon points out) who chafes whenever someone calls her a girl

IF YOU GO

Merrimack Repertory Theatre presents 'Going to See the Kid'

WHEN: Through Dec. 24. See website for dates and times.

WHERE: Nancy L. Donohue Theater, 50 E. Merrimack St., Lowell, Mass.

COST: \$26-\$70. Senior, student, group and military discounts available.

TICKETS: Online at bit.ly/2gbpIWU or by calling 1-978-654-4678.

INFORMATION: www.mrt.org/kid.

instead of a woman. "This is my one shot at immortality," she frets, "like Carroll Hardy" – the only pinch hitter ever for Williams, who did not, in fact, make good use of his own shot.

Simon has ulterior motives for this road trip, as well, as we discover.

Colodner plays the slightly elitist Simon's secret facets well; he and Duerr have a charming, head-butting chemistry. Gregorio gets lots of laughs as he plays a string of additional characters they come across in their travels – from a fey acquaintance of Simon, to a hilarious female, to a crotchety Williams himself. His comic turns steal every scene.

Set designer Jason Sherwood's spare set works, keeping "journalism" ever present, with LED lights encased in hanging plexiglass boxes, printed with actual text from Boston Globe articles. An occasional set piece is moved on and off, like a bar, or chairs to represent the car. The strong trio of actors, all well-known to MRT audiences, are more than enough.

There are some brilliant spots of writing by playwright Steven Drukman. Changing Williams' rampant swearing into Shakespearean patter was clever and funny. The "final descent" joke was one of



Photo courtesy of MEGHAN MOORE

From left, Joel Colodner, Veronika Duerr and John Gregorio, in Merrimack Repertory Theatre's production of "Going to See the Kid."

my favorites. The fourth wall-breaking gets funnier as the play goes on, and the audience was laughing almost constantly throughout.

If I'm honest, the ending was a little too precious for me: The baby, the baby's name, referencing the name of the play, the Fox News joke, how it all ties up so tidily ... But in all, "Going to See the Kid" is a lighthearted show that will appeal to anyone, sports

fan or not, journalist or not, female trying to get ahead in a male-dominated career or not.

This Saturday, MRT continues its free child care offering at the 4 p.m. show. Take advantage of it, and see a delightful, 90-minute play that will leave you feeling "wicked happy."

Kathleen Palmer can be reached at 594-1255, kpalmer@nashuatelegraph.com or @NHFoodandFun and @Telegraph_KathP.

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