Play Reviews

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Play Reviews


C
K-6

The Southwestern Desert is celebrating their annual festival, of which the Golden Gourd Race is the top event. The speedy coyote tricks the old armadillo into competing against him, setting up a tortoise-and-hare-type race. Underneath everything are the constant tricks of the coyote to look like something he is not. The other animals retaliate with tricks of their own.

Although a fun script, there are so many characters and situations that it is hard to wade through to the message. The constant tricks tend to outweigh the real intent of the story. The dialogue is fast-paced, and the addition of Spanish words adds flavor and interest. The play is portable, requiring little scenery. Costumes tend to be the main focus.

This play can be performed for and by children from the grades of K–6. "The Coyote Song" and full production notes are included. —Chris Bartlett


B+
9-12

J.D., a film director, is trying to make an old-fashioned movie about love and the Christmas spirit. Mr. Big, who owns all the studios, says the movie will be J.D.'s last if it doesn't bring in any money. Using high-school students as actors, J.D. tries to instill the importance of goals and dreams into their roles as well as into their lives. His efforts pan out when Mr. Big tries to fire J. D. and the students threaten to have all the teenagers in the state boycott Mr. Big's movies if he does so.

This short, humorous sketch makes a big statement about the trashy teenage movies being made today and also about how important it is for teenagers to have goals. The setting, which is a simple living-room set on a Hollywood sound stage, makes it easy to stage, and the 10–15 minute length makes it ideal for a short assembly skit. —Dianne Breinholt


C–
9-12

*Time and Time Again* is a stage version of the movie *Back to the Future* -- and a poor one, at that. The story line is basically the same as the film, although attempts were made to change circumstances and people. The plot can be predicted from page one, leaving no surprises or room for imagination. The lyrics to the music, however, are perhaps the biggest disappointment of the show. They are trite and often make no sense at all.

There is quite a lot that can be done with the choreography of the piece, but I don't think it would be enough to redeem the poor script. My personal feeling is: rent the video.

—Chris Bartlett

Kushner, Tony. *Yes Yes No No* (from *Plays in Process: Three Plays for Young Audiences*, Vol. 7, No. 11), Theatre Communications Group.

B+
9+

*Yes Yes No No* is intriguing. I'm not sure how to identify it. It's kind of a Christmas play, but then, not really. It sort of educates us in the sciences, but not fully. It could even be classified as a psycho-drama, because it deals with guilt feelings, but it doesn't really help us solve anything. It even deals with religion, but accepts the audience's preferences if they are wrong. I was moved by the play, but at the same time I wasn't sure what...
to think of it. It doesn’t take any stands, as is indicated by the title. It just addresses a lot of issues, and does it rather well.

Most of the play is underscored by Christmas carols sung by the actors who are not speaking. The dialogue often rhymes (with all the subtlety of Dr. Seuss). The setting is the universe; the time is winter solstice. It all sounds very cosmic, yet the play is down-to-earth. *Yes Yes No No* deals with feelings, the deep-seated, undefined ones that everybody has. It doesn’t explain them; they are just accepted.

This play could be performed in any setting, with minimal props and space. A high-school audience and older would best be served by this play, but a mature junior-high audience might also be benefitted. —Erin Caldwell


*Private High* is a play about alcohol abuse and drunk driving. Several adults discuss their alcohol abuse that started in high school. All the characters are interconnected somehow, and their story evolves to a point where a tragedy is about to occur. Suddenly one of the actresses breaks character and forces the other actors to address their personal alcohol use and abuse. There is some improvisation with company members that can include the audience before the scripted plot line is concluded.

The discussion of alcohol abuse, and especially driving while intoxicated is an extremely timely and necessary topic. *Private High* tries to get to the real feelings of why people drink and what could happen while driving under the influence of alcohol. The play is a good start in dealing with the problem, but I don’t think it goes far enough. There is a tendency to be trite, and the actress who breaks character addresses that problem but never eliminates it. The improvisational section might take care of the lack of real gut feelings in the script, but it cannot be relied upon to do so.

I would like to see this play dig deeper and really hit at the roots of alcohol abuse, not just drunk driving. The jumps between character and actor are useful, and help convey the intended message. This play should be performed by skilled, mature actors. It can easily tour and can be performed in any space. —Erin Caldwell