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ENTERTAINMENT & ARTS

'Romeo and Juliet' express their feelings the Brandi Carlile way



Mikayla Conley and Matt Avery portray the title characters in “Romeo and Juliet: Hard Way Home” presented by Cal Rep. (Natalie Morales)

By DARYL H. MILLER
STAFF WRITER

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Life can be a mystery, leaving us to puzzle things out. The feeling is familiar to the characters populating the shows featured in this week’s 99-Seat Beat look at what’s happening in Southern California’s smaller theaters: “Romeo and Juliet: Hard Way Home” by Cal Rep, “The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time” by Greenway Arts Alliance, “Waiting for Waiting for Godot” by Sacred Fools and “The Wrong Kind of People” by Robey Theatre.

‘Romeo and Juliet: Hard Way Home’ by Cal Rep

The essentials: For young people like Romeo and Juliet, Verona is a place where hope dies. Trains crossing the Great Plains blow right past this isolated town, where the past hangs heavy in bitter feuds. What’s a kid to do but stare into the vast, open landscape, trying to imagine a way out? Cue the mournful-resilient Americana music of Brandi Carlile.

Why this? Songs such as “Hard Way Home,” “Raise Hell” and “Just Kids” from Carlisle’s 2012 “Bear Creek” album now convey the tumultuous feelings of the young people in Shakespeare’s play. “Her lyrics are already heightened text; they’re so emotional,” much like Shakespeare’s, says Beth Lopes, the Carlisle fan who conceived and directed “Romeo and Juliet: Hard Way Home” for Cal State Long Beach’s [Cal Rep](#). She hopes to encourage audiences “to think about the world that we are creating for young people, and is it a world in which they feel they have a voice.” The 14 actors are CSULB students; Lopes (who has directed for the likes of South Coast Repertory and Coeurage), the music director and the choreographer are adult professionals.

Details: Cal State Long Beach’s University Theatre, 7th Street and East Campus Drive. 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 2 p.m. Sunday, and 7:30 p.m. Wednesday through Nov. 16. \$18-\$23.

calrep.org.



Kacie Rogers and Iain Kohn in "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time" by Greenway Arts Alliance (Philicia Endelman)

'Curious Incident' by Greenway Arts Alliance

The essentials: Life just won't stay orderly, no matter how much Christopher, an English 15-year-old who's on the spectrum, would like it to. The slaying of a neighbor's dog sets off a major

disruption, prompting him to become a novice detective to set things right again. He soon realizes that he's investigating human nature, the biggest mystery of all.

Why this? In a presentation by [Greenway Arts Alliance](#), the story is given a handmade look, quite a change from the [stunningly technological staging](#) that helped make this piece a West End and Broadway hit. In Simon Stephens' adaptation of Mark Haddon's novel "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time," Christopher's account of his adventure is, at a teacher's urging, made into a play. Kate Jopson, who is directing for Greenway, wants the audience to experience that play as Christopher would make it, with a set crafted from items he would have found within his school, everything meticulously organized and labeled. She also sought an actor on the spectrum, choosing 19-year-old Iain Kohn, an Asperger's syndrome spokesman, spoken-word artist and Cal State Northridge student.

Details: Greenway Court Theatre, 544 N. Fairfax Ave., L.A. 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, through Dec. 8; also 4 p.m. Nov. 24 and Dec. 1 and 8. \$20-\$34. (323) 673-0544,

GreenwayCourtTheatre.org.



Joe Hernandez-Kolski, left, and Bruno Oliver in "Waiting for Waiting for Godot" by Sacred Fools (Jessica Sherman Photography)

'Waiting for Waiting for Godot' by Sacred Fools

The essentials: Two understudies while away time in a theater dressing room, awaiting a call to head to the stage to perform Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot," but day after day, their purpose in life goes unfulfilled. Comparisons to Beckett's original are strongly encouraged.

Why this? New York actor-writer Dave Hanson wrote "Waiting for Waiting for Godot" after understudying for the Beckett play. Jacob Sidney, who is directing the West Coast premiere for [Sacred Fools](#), calls the piece "a loving expression of some of those essential questions that Beckett asks us to struggle with." Should the actors stay? Should they go? Should they come back again tomorrow? Meanwhile, the script kicks up some laughs by poking fun at actors' superstitions and elaborate backstage preparation routines. "He's not afraid of a cheap joke," Sidney says admiringly of Hanson. Bonus fact: The set is lovingly modeled on the dressing room at the Fools' original theater on Heliotrope Drive, its home for more than 17 years.

Details: Broadwater Second Stage, 6320 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood. 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, through Dec. 14; also 8 p.m. Nov. 18 and 5 p.m. Nov. 17 and Dec. 1 and 8. \$15.

SacredFools.org.