

WORLD & NATION | UTAH | SPORTS | BUSINESS | OPINION | FRONT PAGE | ARCHIVES | CLASSIFIEDS | SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

deseretnews.com

Arts & entertainment

Tuesday, March 20, 2007



print
story



e-mail
story

Advertisements

"The perfect twist
on a classic
tale.... I loved it
and will see it
again!"
- Janelle Millard
KSL 5

'Alienation' relevant, remarkable

By **Pat Reavy**

Deseret Morning News

"THE ALIENATION EFFEKT," PLAN-B THEATRE COMPANY, Rose Wagner Center, through April 1 (355-2787 or www.arttix.org), running time: 130 minutes (one intermission)

Probably the most remarkable part of of Tobin Atkinson's great play, "The Alienation Effekt," is that it was written 10 years ago. If you didn't know better, you'd swear it was written yesterday.

"The Alienation Effekt" is as relevant today as it was a decade ago during the height of the debate over allowing gay clubs in public schools. Fast forward to 2007, and the issue of gay clubs once again stirred heavy debate at Utah's Capitol. (Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. signed a bill earlier this month that gives schools the authority to reject a club application in order to "protect the physical, emotional and moral well-being of students" and would require parental permission for a student to join extracurricular clubs)

The play begins in 1980, in Washington, D.C. The freshman senator from Utah, Heber Vigil (Mark Fossen), is soundly defeated in his attempt to allow prayer in public schools. His career gets a second chance after a visit from some high school students from Tremonton who are upset the school won't allow them to meet for a Bible club.

A brilliantly written script with plenty of witty satirical humor put in the hands of an outstanding ensemble of actors gives the audience a peak at the dirty behind-the-scenes happenings of our nation's lawmakers, from which even a Utahn with high moral standards cannot escape.

"The Alienation Effekt" successfully shows that both sides can get carried away, and that the First Amendment is indeed a double-edged sword.

In the play's second half, Vigil, now governor of Utah, tries to backtrack on his own platform that all clubs deserve equal protection when a group of students — led by his own daughter,

Stay motivated!



Your girlfriends can get you moving to reduce your risk of cancer, diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

EVERYDAYCHOICES.ORG



who has come out of the closet — wants to start a gay-straight coalition.

Unfortunately, both sides take the issue too far, and Vigil's daughter, Jeannie (Colleen Lewis), is caught in the middle, when all she wanted was a club to meet with others who were like her so she could talk to people who understand her.

Now, her father wants her to be the spokeswoman of the anti-gay-club movement, while her friends want her to publicly denounce her father and be a rallying figure for gay students. In the end, the pressure is too much for the young girl to handle.

The simple set includes two video screens that are used to set up each scene.

A cast of eight plays more than 40 characters in this fast-moving play. But Atkinson doesn't want the audience to get involved emotionally with any particular player. The goal is to engage the audience intellectually.

Atkinson wants the audience to remember that they are just watching a play, and at one point he has the actors take a short pause from the story and address the audience out of character.

The faces of the actors are painted white, but the paint comes off little by little as the play progresses until there is none left. By this point, the audience is not supposed to feel emotion for the characters now revealed to them.

When a play based on real events and loosely based on real characters looks graphically at some of the possible consequences, one can't help but think.

Sensitivity rating: Strong language, mature themes, one loud gun blast; not for young children.

E-mail: preavy@desnews.com

Advertisement