

May 2, 2006

## Dysfunctional was never so funny as 'Captivity'

BY ANN BENNETT  
THEATER REVIEWER

Jewel Theater Company is offering its second foray into the local theater scene with a vivacious look at the work of the well-known satiric playwright Nicky Silver. "Born in Captivity" is a captivating piece of drama, a play that dishes out weirdly oddball and ironic humor and then turns around and blindsides you with onslaughts of brutal reality. It's a tricky kind of theater that requires a delicate balance to pull off, and JTC has just the right touch.

The play focuses on a brother and sister who have just been reunited after a family death; they evidently never shared much in common, and they still don't. Logically this occasion should bring them together or at least provide a time for shared experiences and a fresh acceptance of each other.

Actually, after an initial half-hearted attempt to co-exist, their old habits and their personal neuroses re-emerge and escalate. You think you come from a dysfunctional family? You'll love "Born in Captivity."

The production is directed by Julie James, who also plays the hilariously hysterical sister, Bernadette. She's a lady who is searching for some sort of clarity in her life but can't get past her own frantic frustration to recognize it if she actually saw it. James is a gem in the role — she winds herself up to an improbable level of frenzy in the first scenes and never comes down. Like a Roman candle, she spins her wildly passionate verbiage off in all directions, usually with no particular target in mind.

As her manic-depressive brother, Sebastian, Lance LaShelle toys with minimal manic and maximum depressive as he simmers through the evening. If he's crazy, it's crazy like a fox, and most of his craziness is camouflage for his own emotional turmoil. He combines his innocent lovability with pure lunacy to keep the play popping up and down all evening.

A fine performance is by Steve Beck as Bernadette's vague husband, Kip.

Beck projects the perfect sense of unreality as he quietly transforms himself in the midst of chaos, sublimely unaware of the pitfalls he blissfully cruises among.

Ruth E. Mullins contributes her own mayhem as Hillary, a psychologist gone bonkers. It's a lovely cameo role, and Mullins plays it with proper appreciation for the dichotomy she is presenting. As with her characterization of Miranda, she creates farce with good control.

Andrew Ceglio also plays two apposite characters, both intrinsically violent. His strong interpretations make both Dylan and Roger vital and vivid, and his roles add unexpected depth to the play.

Direction is good throughout, and set design accommodates the action and the various scenes well. The cast is strong, all capably projecting the personalities of this unlikely group as they wrestle with the complexities of their individual insecurities and emotional crises. The play is wildly funny and the cast revels in the sometimes macabre humor. Much of the hilarity depends on the visual contretemps developed by the characters, and a lot of it is off-the-wall silly, but "Raised in Captivity" is not your standard comedy. The play is occasionally surprisingly subtle; some of the interactions catch you off guard when you least expect it while other scenes are flat-out ridiculous. It must be seen to be appreciated.

Contact Ann Bennett at [svreeken@santacruzsentinel.com](mailto:svreeken@santacruzsentinel.com).

## If You Go


**WHAT:** 'Raised in Captivity.'

**WHERE:** Broadway Playhouse, Santa Cruz Art League, 526 Broadway, Santa Cruz.

**WHEN:** 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturday and 2 p.m. Sundays, through May 14.

**COST:** \$20 adults, \$18 students and seniors.

**DETAILS:** 454-1143 or visit [jeweltheatre.net](http://jeweltheatre.net).

 Print Article

---

You can find this story online at:

<http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/archive/2006/May/02/style/stories/01style.htm>

---

Copyright © Santa Cruz Sentinel. All rights reserved.

