

REVIEW

Clague's 'See Rock City' actors hits all the right notes in show

By Joseph Clark
Correspondent

Clague Playhouse is staging the subdued Southern drama "See Rock City" by Arlene Hutton.

"Rock City" serves as a sequel to Hutton's "Last Train to Nibroc," which was staged at Clague last year. However, the play's action is self-contained to such an extent that it can be seen, understood, and enjoyed without having taken in its predecessor.

Under Rob Gibb's direction, Jeff Bartholomew and Kristen Levy return as Raleigh Brummett and May Gill (now May Brummett), a young couple in World War II-era rural Kentucky. When we last saw the couple, they had become engaged, despite Raleigh's uncertain future. As an epileptic, he had been discharged from

both the Army and factory work, and later forcibly hospitalized, Raleigh had sold his first story to a New York magazine based on his experiences in an asylum, steeling him to pursue a career as a writer. May was a swiftly ascending and effective middle school principal, whose brother Charlie was leaving for the newly declared war against the Axis Powers.

When we rejoin them, Raleigh and May are freshly returned from a belated and accidental honeymoon in Cincinnati. May faces new challenges at school as children's fathers and teachers' husbands fight overseas, and her choice to continue to working after marriage raises eyebrows.

Raleigh has been hard at work writing, but editors aren't buying. He is increasingly wary of going into town, where the folk

are skeptical of his medical discharge, and suspect him of cowardice. For this, they heap shame upon Raleigh's mother, Mrs. Brummett (Erin Bunting), who also accuses Raleigh of laziness - though never to his face.

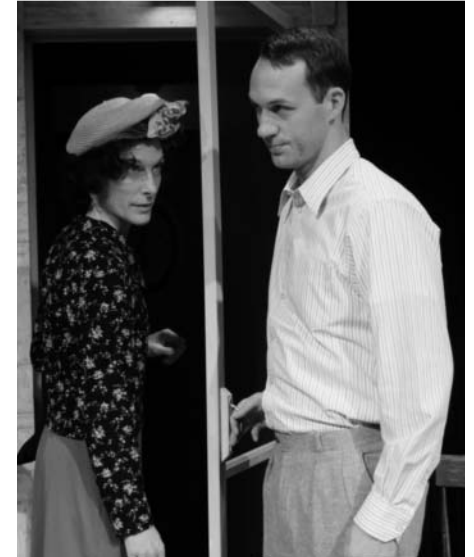
Still, Raleigh wrestles with the perceptions brought by a working wife and living with May's parents (Pa is always in the workshop out back, but Mama Gill, played by Paige Reich, makes energetic appearances.) He has plans to better himself and his living conditions, but societal expectations and his medical condition erect unforeseen hurdles.

Bartholomew and Levy have an effortless chemistry in their now-familiar roles, the transition from reluctant couple to struggling but loving newlyweds is believable. Though "Nibroc"

was a two-person show, Bunting and Reich seamlessly fit into the world of the narrative. Reich as a mother is kind but never too soft, and Bunting captures the euphemistic tone of someone cruel without realizing it.

"See Rock City" will run through Feb. 5, with performances at 8 p.m. on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, and at 2 p.m. at 1371 Clague Road, Westlake. Adult tickets are \$16, and seniors and students receive a \$1 discount. Pre-payment for tickets is required, and can be done either by calling (440) 331-0403 or in person at the box office. **See more community theater news and reviews at cleveland.com/community-theater.**

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Erin Bunting is Mrs. Brummett and Jeff Bartholomew is Raleigh share a moment in Clague Playhouse's "See Rock City."