

Firebelly Productions presents

A Body of Water, by Lee Blessing

Before opening night of *A Body Of Water* we interviewed the Director, Michael Ryan Fernandez, about this production, why he choose this play, and his intent on directing this. What follows are our questions and the director's responses.

What is it about this play that you find intriguing?

Much about this play excites me. When an actor typically prepares for a role that preparation always involve figuring out their characters past. Whether that involves research or creating an identity, an actor should know from where that character came. With *A Body of Water* that process changes, and what I love is that this process is unique to this play. These actor are going to need to develop a personality and background, while making sure they don't let these choices and decisions affect the natural and innate personality that should come through when one has no recollection of their past. This play is a conundrum for the actors before they even step into a theater.

How do you intend to convey this to the audience?

The most amazing way to tell a story is to make your audience feel the same as one or more of the characters within the story. I want the people who come to see this play to feel as alienated, lost, and confused as the characters. I want everyone to be a part of the discovery and the frustration that happens throughout this play and to feel what it might be like to be lost without a memory in the world. If the audience goes through the same journey as these characters do, they will become more invested in them, so I want this to be a time of discovery for the audience as much as it is for the actors.

How does this show and the cast meet the objectives of the Firebelly mission statement?

Between the cast and I, we have an even mix of artists, some with much experience, some with less just beginning our careers. I know, this being my first professional show as a director, I will be learning as much as I can from the cast, and from the production staff of Firebelly. I feel as though this company has already given me plenty of freedom, while at the same time guiding me along the way when I need the guidance. Learning and doing go hand in hand at Firebelly, which is the way I learn and work most effectively.

What is unique about this cast and this script?

One of the things that I find refreshing about this script is that it has one of the best blends of comedy and drama that I have seen. I plan to approach this play like it is a comedy, and I hope that in doing so the dramatic parts become that much more important. If you approach a play like this as though it were a drama, not only do you tend to glaze over the comedic parts, but you feel like you are just waiting for the really dramatic moments, and then those moments don't pop out like they should. A serio-comedy, like *A Body of Water*, is a delicate creature, but we have a cast that is perfect for it.

How does this production relate to society or reflect contemporary issues?

This is not the kind of play that is attempting to talk about the issues, and I don't intend to focus on that even if it were. This is a play that dives into the basic nature of humans, and that is always something that relates to society. This play is almost like a psychology or sociology experiment within a controlled environment. The setting of this play is very non-descript as far as time and place, and that is the great part about it. It is removed from all social issues, and these people have to deal with who they are in a bubble. I hope this play can act almost as an escape from what we're dealing with, and maybe afterwards it can change the way we view the things we do.