

THE K OF D

Supernatural thriller by Laura Schellhardt

A Virginia Premiere Theatre Presentation

Mary T. Christian Auditorium

Thomas Nelson Community College

Hampton, Virginia

Sept.25-30 at 7:30; Oct.2-7 at 7:30; Sept. 30 & Oct. 7 at 2:00

Call 1-800-595-4TIX

Hello, I'm Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large. The new theatre season is underway in Hampton Roads. For me it began with THE K OF D. Be forewarned that this highly original drama in the magical presence of Mary Wadkins is a hard act to follow for other theatres .because Mary Wadkins is a conjure .woman, blessed with extraordinary acting powers.

Wadkins is petite, somewhat larger than a stick of dynamite, with flashes of brilliant explosions that make this thriller a riveting hour and a half or so in the theatre. She plays seventeen characters. They include of a pack of teenagers in a woebegone town in Ohio, a set of parents, a father and his adult son and his assorted girl friends. Wadkins manages to give distinctive life and breath, depth and dimension, to each of them. She's a masterful quick sketch artist shifting from one character to others in the blink of an eye. I've never seen a performance quite like this one in any of our area's theatres or anywhere else for that matter.

The action takes place over a long hot summer. One of the characters points out that legendary summers have a "the" before them, as in the summer of the tornado, or the summer of the locusts. The ghost story events of this play happen in the summer of death. The twin brother of young skinny Charlotte is hit and killed by an automobile. As he is dying, he kisses his sister on the lips. From then on, starting with a cricket, everything Charlotte kisses dies. Then a dog is laid to rest. Is it her kisses or maybe something else causing the escalating deaths? More I can not tell you.

Playwright Schellhardt's dialogue and narration are a mother lode of lyrical beauty and hypnotic intensity. You want to grasp every word. She creates chills and thrills and mystery and suspense that every good thriller must have. Director Rebecca Taylor finds every possible color and variation in guiding Wadkins through her thesaurus of characters with rapid fire transitions and unrelenting intensity. One might feel the need of a sort of breathing pause on occasion to define significant moments. Also, I'm not sure the playwright has found a clear cathartic conclusion for the play. To be sure these are minor points of concern before this work has a major performance in Washington D.C..

Set designer Lausanne Davis-Carpenter has come up with a graceful, fluid performance space that she lights with subtle, enhancing beauty. Most significantly, Bart Fasbender has created a world of sounds that assume the role of a second actor. The interplay and blending of Wadkins and his auditory ambience are quite remarkable unto themselves.

This is Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large and I'll see you at the next opening.