

H.B. Playhouse Relocates with 'Geezers'

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Review by Tom Titus

The Huntington Beach Playhouse is no longer in Huntington Beach. If you're looking for the 55-year-old community theater's production of "*Geezers*," check out Westmont School in Westminster.

Yes, the nearly 20-year run at the city's Library Theater is over, but the playhouse carries on, mounting Tommy Lee Johnston's comedic drama of life in a retirement home where some of its residents aren't quite ready to go gently into the good night.

The play focuses on a new assistant caregiver, a painfully introverted young man with visions of becoming a writer. His interviews with the old folks bring them, and him, sharper into focus.

Approaching 30, Jack (Daniel Lee) has never even kissed a girl, much less rounded the proverbial bases. The son of a now-deceased deaf mother doesn't number communication among his strong suits, and Lee plays this terminally shy character quite effectively.

More colorful is the home's manager, Elizabeth Desloge, whose perky facade masks a painful back-story of drugs and alcohol. Desloge beautifully takes charge of the residents and her own demons.

Among the "geezers" in residence, Beth Titus is the most memorable as a onetime actress and playgirl who has retained her sensuous demeanor, having been caught seducing Jack's predecessor. (I avoided reviewing this actress for 13 years since she was my other half, but that was long, long ago).

Michael Corcoran scores as a retired military man who still radiates a sense of authority. Jim Perham effectively enacts a sleepy old gent who hugs a pillow for reasons that eventually materialize.

Comic relief is supplied by the always-delightful Kip Hogan as Emily, a demented old soul who's glued to the TV set and who sings along with the commercials. She's visited regularly by Jenny, the briskly radiant Laurie Robbins, for reasons that become apparent.

Three of the residents have younger selves who materialize as Jack conducts their interviews. These are Deedee Culp, Robert Born and David Edward Reyes, all of whom deliver strongly in their cameo sequences.

Director Mark Torreso has instilled relatable qualities into the performances that render this production quite touching. Playhouse technicians have adapted the borrowed stage as best they can, but more effort should be put into lighting (during one of Jenny's monologues she's in shadow while Jack, just listening, is fully lit).

"Geezers" will be appreciated by seasoned playgoers, but younger audiences also can find much to enjoy in this new production by the transplanted Huntington Beach Playhouse.