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# Heller Theatre stamp their considerable authority on Mauritius

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Nothing is ever quite what it seems in *Mauritius*, a complex, dark comedy by Pulitzer prize nominee Theresa Rebeck, currently running at the [Heller Theatre](#). Here postage stamps may or may not be worth a fortune, con men may or may not be trying to pull a scam and family members may or may not be trying to steal from you. What ensues, if ultimately predictable, is a tightly plotted, engaging romp which is part mystery, part thriller, part family drama and all fun.

*Mauritius* tells the story of Jackie, a distraught woman who, following her mother's death, is attempting to have a collection of stamps appraised by an obnoxious philatelist, Philip. Instead, a shady con man Dennis offers to look at her collection and comes to believe he has discovered two rare and extremely valuable stamps. Into this scenario arrives Sterling, a shady and dangerous businessman who wants the stamps for himself and Mary, Jackie's half-sister, who claims to be the stamps rightful owner.

In *Mauritius* the themes of betrayal and entitlement are never far from the surface, but its focus never wavers from the behaviors people will, or will not engage in, in order to get what they want. These behaviors are brought to life by some extremely credible performances. Mike McCarthy as the obnoxious Philip and Jeremy Sheldon as the smooth con man Dennis are both convincing and engaging, as is Liz Masters as the self righteous Mary, the half-sister who disputes the ownership of the stamps. Sara Wilemon as the nervous and frustrated Jackie desperate to begin a new life and struggling to master the situation she finds herself in is utterly convincing. As is Craig Walter who delivers a powerhouse performance as the violent businessman Sterling, bringing an intensity and presence that makes every scene crackle with energy. Powerful, threatening, manipulative, passionate, Walter's subtle yet compelling portrayal has to be a serious contender for one of the best performances of 2010.

Erin Scarberry, possibly the hardest working person on the Tulsa theater circuit, once again does an outstanding job as set designer, perfectly capturing the atmosphere of gloom and seediness that permeates the script. It is worth mentioning that Scarberry also designed the excellent set for

Odeum Theatre's *After Miss Julie*, currently running at the Tulsa Performing Arts Center and which is also reviewed on this website.

Scarberry also takes the helm as director of this production and her many commitments in no way undermine her ability to do an extremely competent job. Pace is well handled and a strong energy is maintained throughout. Scarberry obviously trusts her actors and receives some excellent work in return, but the need for a director's decisive, guiding presence was badly required on occasion to prevent some carelessness (excessive gesticulating, clichéd maniacal laughter, mantra like repetition of key phrases and actions delivered in a consistently similar manner). As a result scenes occasionally got bogged down momentarily or were pitched in the wrong direction. Balance got lost for a time and the subtly demanded to articulate the nuances of this dark comedy was not always present. But when Scarberry got it just right, which she did more often than not, her dual talents as set designer and director, along with an excellent cast, helped create some truly memorable moments making this a rich and enjoyable production well worth seeing.

*Mauritius* runs November 13th at 7.30 p.m., and November 14th at 2.00 p.m. at the Heller Theatre. Admission \$10.00



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