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Theatre Raleigh's Production of "Crimes of the Heart" Is as Real as Real Life

Posted by [Susie Potter+](#) • August 18th, 2014 • [Printer-friendly](#)



Maigan Kennedy (left), Jennifer Violette Avery (center), and Dana Zihlman Harshaw will star as Babe, Lenny, and Meg in Theatre Raleigh's Aug. 13-24 production of "Crimes of the Heart" (photo by Curtis Brown Photography)

Beth Henley's tragicomedy "Crimes of the Heart" zeroes in on three dysfunctional-but-charming sisters as they confront one another and themselves, owning up to past and present mistakes. This mass-confrontation is set in motion by spunky Babe, endearingly portrayed by **Maigan Kennedy**, who has recently shot her husband, something about which she feels no remorse. Seemingly stable Lenny, brought to life in a strong performance by **Jennifer Avery**, is there, as always, to help Babe pick up the pieces, and beautiful-but-troubled Meg (**Dana Zihlman Harshaw**) makes her way back to small Hazlehurst, Mississippi to join in on the drama and maybe even cause a little of her own.

The action plays out in the girls' grandfather's home, fully realized through a believable, 1970s-style set featuring wonderfully kitschy touches. Poignant, funny, and sad moments — such as Lenny celebrating her birthday alone and Babe revealing the truth behind her actions — play out against this perfect backdrop, giving the play a "homey" feel and making the story all the more intimate.

All three of the female leads manage the ever-changing emotional terrain of the piece adeptly, though it is Kennedy who really shines with her doe-eyed, slightly unbalanced portrayal of Babe. Also holding their own are the show's more minor performances, including the always-talented **Jesse Gephart** as Barnette, Babe's besotted lawyer, and **Sandi Sullivan** as larger-than-life, uber-critical cousin Chick.

This touching and oft-hilarious family drama doesn't offer up any easy answers, but it does serve its purpose as an authentic, slice-of-life piece with memorable characters, thanks in large part to **Jeffrey Meanza's** non-rushed direction. Meanza allows his actors to take their time onstage, resulting in fully developed characters and a production that's as close to real life — uncomfortable moments and all — as well...real life. And, while Henley's script leaves a lot of questions unanswered and ends on an uncertain note, its innate true-to-life quality makes its story memorable and its impact long-lasting.

Theatre Raleigh presents **CRIMES OF THE HEART** at 8 p.m. Aug. 20-22, 2 and 8 p.m. Aug. 23, 3 p.m. Aug. 24 in the Sara Lynn and K.D. Kennedy, Jr. Theater in the Duke Energy Center for the Performing Arts, 2 E. South St., Raleigh, North Carolina 27601.

TICKETS: \$27 (\$25 students, seniors 65+, and active-duty military personnel), except \$22 per person for groups of 10 or more.

BOX OFFICE: 919-480-5166 or <https://web.ovationtix.com/trs/cal/27655/140693760000>.

GROUP RATES (10+ tickets): 919-480-5166.

SHOW: <http://www.theatreraleigh.com/crimes-of-the-heart/>, <https://www.facebook.com/events/1385669038346397/>, and <http://www.dukeenergycenterraleigh.com/event/crimes-of-the-heart-4035>.

2014 "HOT SUMMER NIGHTS" SEASON: <http://www.theatreraleigh.com/2014-season/>.

PRESENTER: <http://www.theatreraleigh.com/>, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Theatre-Raleigh/349124511834045>, and <https://twitter.com/TheatreRaleigh>.

VENUE: <http://www.dukeenergycenterraleigh.com/venue/kennedy-theatre>.

DIRECTIONS: <http://www.dukeenergycenterraleigh.com/directions>.

PARKING: <http://www.dukeenergycenterraleigh.com/parking>.

OTHER LINKS:

Crimes of the Heart (1980 Off-Broadway and 1981 Broadway comedy/drama): <http://www.dramatists.com/cgi-bin/db/single.asp?key=1271> (Dramatists Play Service, Inc.), <http://www.lortel.org/> (Internet Off-Broadway Database), <http://www.ibdb.com/show.php?id=2820> (Internet Broadway Database), and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crimes_of_the_Heart (Wikipedia).

Beth Henley (Jackson, MS-born playwright and screenwriter): <http://www.lortel.org/> (Internet Off-Broadway Database), <http://www.ibdb.com/person.php?id=4521> (Internet Broadway Database), <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0377107/> (Internet Movie Database), and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beth_Henley (Wikipedia).

Crimes of the Heart (1986 film): <http://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/71821/Crimes-Of-The-Heart/> (Turner Classic Movies), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0090886/> (Internet Movie Database), and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crimes_of_the_Heart_%28film%29 (Wikipedia).

Jeffrey Meanza (Chapel Hill, NC director): <http://www.playmakersrep.org/aboutus/artist.aspx?id=a4a7e381-a5f5-453b-86cb-208ad00135a9> (PlayMakers Repertory Company bio).

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Susie Potter is a Raleigh, NC-based freelance writer and editor. She is a 2009 graduate of Raleigh's Meredith College, where she majored in English. She holds graduate degrees in teaching and American literature from North Carolina State University in Raleigh. In addition to her work for **Triangle Arts and Entertainment**, she is an award-winning author of short fiction. Her works have

appeared in The Colton Review, Raleigh Quarterly, Broken Plate Magazine, Big Muddy: A Journal of the Mississippi River Valley, the Chaffey Review, and Existere. To read all of Susie Potter's Triangle Arts and Entertainment articles and reviews, click <http://triangleartsandentertainment.org/author/susie-q/>. To read more of her writings, click <http://www.susiepotter.com> and <http://www.myspace.com/susiepotter>.

Summary

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