

East County playwrights deliver with 'The Split'



Photos by David Croxford

Laurie Zimmerman, left, Tom Aposporos, Dianne Brin, Fred Zimmerman and Kelly Burnette starred in "The Split."

BY BRIAN MCMILLAN

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Don't laugh now — you might miss something.

With the speed of an Abbott and Costello routine, Dianne Brin and Tom Aposporos had the near-capacity crowd of 200 at Riverfront Theatre laughing at female foibles and male maladies all night long when "The

THEATER

"THE SPLIT"

Riverfront Theatre
Reviewed July 9

"Split" made its world premiere July 9.

With sexy strings of one-liners and double entendres, it was easy to for-

give the slow first-half plot development in East County playwrights Jack Gilhooley and Jo Morello's semi-autobiographical romantic comedy. Brin and Aposporos played Tony-award-winning playwright duo Marie and Charlie Williamson, whose marriage is failing, along with their critical reputation.

In the first few scenes, they decide to split up their marriage, their belongings and the royalties from their plays. As the lights come back on for the second scene, there is a yellow strip of police tape separating the stage down the middle. Charlie and Marie continue taking cheap shots at each other and clash two worlds together — immature adolescents (e.g. the police tape) and that of sexually driven intellectuals. Loads of fresh laughs is the result. Instead of groaning at overused sexual humor, which easily could have happened, the audience erupted at the quick wits of this clever couple.

So even though the characters didn't change much, and the minor characters were the driving force of nearly all of the action,

Charlie and Marie were entertaining, as the play-within-the-play effect.

Gilhooley and Morello are playwrights who wrote a play about playwrights who wrote a play. At one point, Charlie's agent reads a scene from the play he's working on and it echoes an earlier conversation he and Marie have in the opening scenes. I had to wonder if that scene goes back even further — if it was a real conversation Gilhooley and Morello had as they were writing "The Split" together.

Some of the best lines were aimed at the process of collaboration in writing, at agents and theatergoers. In one of the opening scenes, Charlie claims that he, as a man, gave their plays an intellectual side and that Marie was there simply to add a human touch. Marie retorts that she was always correcting his grammar and lowering his toilet seat.

"Agents are the enemies of art," Charlie tells his agent during the play.

One of the minor characters says of theater audiences: "It's a room full of rich old white people who nod off after half an hour."

The lines poke fun at the theater scene, and it works brilliantly, with Gilhooley and Morello the real butt of many of their jokes.

Speaking with Gilhooley after the play helped it become more real that this was semi-autobiographical. He was relieved the play went well and that the audience enjoyed it but admitted that it's not easy to go to the premiere of your own play.

"I've never had a baby, but this is the equivalent of a male having a baby," he said.

At intermission, Morello said there were parts she expected to get bigger laughs, but she said people were afraid they'd miss the next one-liner if they laughed.