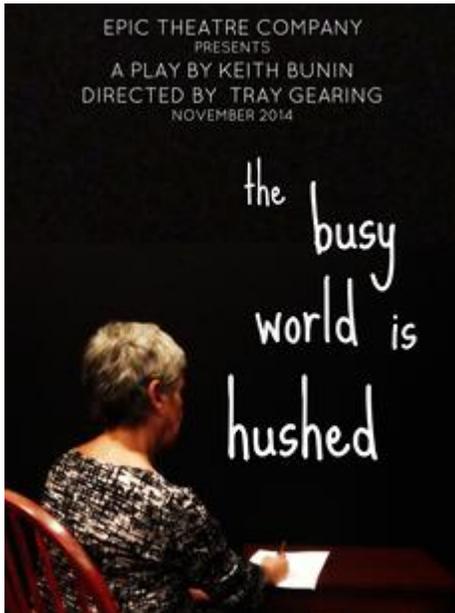


The Busy World Is Hushed



The Busy World Is Hushed, being performed by Epic Theatre Company, is a thought-provoking and at times heartbreaking examination of faith and religion. The most remarkable quality of Keith Bunin's play is its deft balance of comedy and drama in telling a story about tortured characters.

Hannah (Mary Paolino) is an Episcopalian minister who discovers an ancient gospel that she believes contains the "true words of Jesus." When the play begins, Hannah hires a young writer named Brandt (Kevin Broccoli) to write a book chronicling the teachings of the gospel. Brandt tells Hannah his father is dying from a brain tumor and explains to Hannah that he isn't sure if there really is a god. "Religion is a desperate attempt to make death more bearable," he says.

One day, Hannah's son Thomas (Stephen Peterson) shows up at the church, bloodied and bruised after hiking. Thomas is a troubled man who never healed after the traumatic death of his father. He travels the country like a vagabond and returns home occasionally to rifle through his father's journals.

Brandt and Thomas soon discover a mutual attraction and fall in love, a situation Hannah encourages for her own selfish reasons. Meanwhile, Hannah and Thomas are at odds over her faith in God and his complete lack of faith in any type of religion, and the story takes many dramatic turns. The power of *The Busy World Is Hushed* comes from the conflict the characters have in trying to understand why a loving God could cause so much pain in their lives.

Paolino is convincing and deeply sympathetic as Hannah tries desperately to turn her son around. Broccoli displays a masterful sense of comic timing, and also excels in the dramatic moments. He is particularly effective when Brandt expresses his heartbreak late in the play. Peterson, making his debut on the Epic stage, more than holds his own working with Paolino and Broccoli. His character drives much of the conflict in the story.

The Busy World Is Hushed is a compelling entertainment and does what all great theater does: it stirs the heart, the mind and the soul.

The Busy World Is Hushed, performed by Epic Theatre Company. Through Nov 23 at The Artists' Exchange, 50 Rolfe Square, Cranston. For tickets, go to artists-exchange.org/epictheatrecompany.html or call 401.490.9475.