

TA's Lonely Planet: A Review

After a pandemic-induced winter shutdown, live productions are back at Theatre Aurora starting with *?Lonely Planet?*.

The play by Steven Dietz tells the story of two gay men, Jody and Carl, living in a large US city during the AIDS epidemic.

Jody owns a map store, which he never seems to leave. His isolation is magnified by an increasing habit of keeping his shop closed, even during business hours.

His only companion is his friend and frequent visitor Carl, who encourages Jody to get out and live his life.

One day, Carl brings a new chair into the store. Over time, this is followed by more seating in a variety of styles. In fact, so many chairs take up residence in the shop that they are soon stacked everywhere.

Where are these chairs coming from? Why is Carl collecting them? Is this related to the frequent phone calls he receives at the map store? And when events force Jody to venture out of the safety of his shop, will he be able to do so?

As Jody, Chris Cluff does an excellent job portraying a man who is becoming increasingly isolated, and although aware of this change in his personality, is not sure he can overcome it.

Luke Elisio brings Carl's character to life with his enthusiasm for and interest in, events happening in the neighbourhood outside Jody's shop, and his desire to inspire these feelings in his friend.

Together, the two actors do a great job in depicting the unlikely friendship and growth of these characters.

Director Sergio Calderon's map store set is simple, yet effective, as is the lighting. The growth in the number of chairs on stage as the play progresses, and the actor's ability to work around them, is impressive to watch.

Overall, *?Lonely Planet?* is a welcome return for live theatre at Theatre Aurora.

Note that COVID protocols are in place at the theatre, which includes the requirement for patrons to wear masks at all times while within the building.

Evening performances of *?Lonely Planet?* continue at Theatre Aurora, 150 Henderson Drive, May 5, 6, 7, 12, 13 and 14 with a matinee on May 8.

Tickets are available through the box office at 905-727-3669.

By Scott Johnston