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THEATER REVIEW | 'THE PLAY ABOUT MY DAD'

A Hard Rain Begins to Fall on Lives in Gulfport, Miss.



Chantel C. Lucier

From left, Tracey Gilbert, Anna Greenfield and Jay Potter in “The Play About My Dad,” by Boo Killebrew.

By ANDY WEBSTER

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With “The Play About My Dad,” Boo Killebrew attempts a daunting juggling act: telling multiple accounts of Hurricane Katrina’s assault on her hometown, Gulfport, Miss., and recounting the dissolution of her parents’ marriage and her rapprochement with her father, a doctor called to action when the storm hits. She largely pulls it off, though detours intermittently threaten the balance.

It starts as a play within a play, with Boo (Anna Greenfield) debating with her father, Larry (Jay Potter), about its authorship — she wrote it, but his stories populate it — and then plunges into the biblical hell that was Gulfport in 2005. The inhabitants include a family — Rena (Annie Henk), Jay (Juan Francisco Villa) and Michael (David Rosenblatt) — at home (and on a roof) as floodwaters rise; two emergency medical workers (T J

Witham and Jordan Mahome) stranded in their vehicle; and an 87-year-old (Geany Masai) who lost a daughter years ago and is waiting for her son. Interspersed are flashbacks of fraught Killebrew family dynamics, which, given the life-and-death circumstances of the others, seem minor in comparison and a bit indulgent, if heartfelt. Larry, who left his wife (Tracey Gilbert, barely seen) for another woman, appears to be his daughter's favorite parent. Given Mr. Potter's dignity and rumpled Dixie charm, it's easy to see why. As Boo, Ms. Greenfield is an appealing blend of coltish energy and limpid emotion.

Directed by Lee Sunday Evans, this 59E59 Theaters production avoids lulls. Nick Houfek's effective lighting at times involves complete darkness. And there are moments — when the actors freeze to behold the darkening skies — when silence falls like both a shadow and a shudder at the cataclysm to come.