

"On Golden Pond" □ □ □ □ Act Two Playhouse □ □ □ □ Nov. 17 - Dec. 13



Quite simply, Act II Playhouse is on a roll. Under the artistic direction of Bud Martin, this quaint theater in Ambler, PA is quickly establishing a reputation as one of Philadelphia's finest theater venues.

It started with last season's production of the musical "Respect." This show, which celebrated the achievements of women over the years, was a runaway success and was actually extended twice. In fact, in January it will continue its run at the Society Hill Playhouse.

This year Martin, with his Great White Way connections, scored a coup when he became the first Philadelphia Theater to produce the Broadway hit "Boeing Boeing." Again, the run was a huge success, enjoying a sold-out run and yet another extension.

That brings us to the current production of "On Golden Pond." Act II has assembled an all-star cast that makes for a thought provoking night of pure entertainment. "On Golden Pond" is a touching story of a feisty couple facing their twilight years. While this might suggest a maudlin story line, "On Golden Pond" is anything but. It is more of a celebration of love and family.

It all starts when you enter this intimate theater and take one look at a magnificent set designed by Dirk Durossette. The rustic summer cabin immediately transports you to Golden Pond in all its splendor.

The pairing of noted Philadelphia actors Tom McCarthy and Carla Belver is sheer genius. Having acted together on many occasions, their comfort zone is obvious and contagious. It is clear that these two have an undeniable chemistry. They are surrounded by an outstanding cast that includes Megan Bellwoar, Peter Balcke, Tom Byrn, and Carl Granieri. Bellwoar is particularly convincing as the sometimes estranged daughter.

Act II's Artistic Director, Bud Martin, orchestrates this production and does so seamlessly. Good directors are like good umpires or officials. When they are good, you hardly even notice them. When they are bad, it is painfully obvious. Martin's direction allows the action to flow gracefully and the actors to hit their stride.

"On Golden Pond" runs until December 13. It is well worth the trip to Ambler to visit the summer cottage that feels like home to all of us.
