

FIXED

Review excerpts



Passage Theatre presents David Lee White's 'Fixed'

[A broken system revealed](#)

[Mark Cofta](#)

The Broadstreet Review

When mental illness appears in the news, it's often associated with violent events and editorials about preventing mentally ill people from harming others. The counter-argument to more gun regulation is a call for more mental health care. What's missing in that discussion, however, is the more typical daily struggle with mental illness that many people — who will never commit violent crimes or make headlines — face, often alone.

Cognitive cocktail

Playwright David Lee White writes movingly of one such person in *Fixed*, a world premiere at Trenton's Passage Theatre Company. In director Maureen Heffernan's smart production, Maria Konstantinidis plays Ronnie, whose high school friends Daryl (Phillip Gregory Burke) and Janine (Alicia Isabel Rivas) intervene when she's spiraling.

Flashbacks

Much of *Fixed* revisits the trio's high school friendship, when they would meet at a local sculpture called The Rhombus. Daryl and Valerie aspired to careers after high school, while Ronnie just wanted escape. But she couldn't run away from the voices in her head, which we often hear as

whispers in Chris Sannino's sound design, Amanda Jensen's lighting augments this effect with illumination that flickers like fireflies in when the voices act up.

Konstantinidis excels as mercurial Ronnie, whose manic moments hide her terrible home life. She switches impressively from Ronnie's almost-normal teenage behavior to her mid-30s derangement. Burke and Rivas likewise transition between the two time periods, believably revealing the bonding of high school misfits and their uneasy adult relationship. They're joined in the present by Deena Jiles-Shu'aib as a harried but well-meaning doctor who steers Ronnie into treatment despite the many hurdles required by a splintered mess of programs.

Heffernan's production emphasizes the flow of scenes in two time periods, using Susan DeConcini's set of six framed screens in different shapes, like puzzle pieces, onto which drawings of locations are projected along with abstract representations of emotional states, giving the play a hand-drawn graphic-novel quality.

Hopefulness

While *Fixed* doesn't shy away from the ugliness and messiness of mental illness, White's story is ultimately positive, stressing the importance of caring people who can intercede for the mentally ill. Alone, they face a bureaucratic abyss, but with supportive friends, Ronnie's tale shows, they might have a chance. Healthcare provides no clear path now for those seeking help, however, and recent developments suggest that assistance will be even more difficult in the future.

"Fixed" can mean repaired, of course, which is unlikely with mental illness. Like addicts, maintenance requires constant effort. "Fixed" also means stuck in one place. Which meaning best describes mental health in our country is up to us.

The new play 'Fixed' at Passage Theatre takes up deep inside a tortured mind

By Patrick Maley | For NJ Advance Media

"David Lee White's new play "Fixed" produced by the Passage Theatre Company (where White is a former Associate Director) sets out to examine mental illness from a variety of avenues. Not only do we see the struggles of Ronnie (Maria Konstantinidis) trying to navigate an everyday world that is becoming increasingly distant and frightening to her, but we also venture regularly inside Ronnie's fractured mind for a dramatized glimpse of her delusions. It is an inventive technique that makes "Fixed" an intriguing and at times compelling portrait of mental illness and its repercussions.

"...Without these glimpses inside Ronnie's psyche it might have been difficult to summon much more than pity for her scattered sense of defiance, but White and Konstantinidis combine to create a more complex rendering of her illness, allowing us to move past pity towards understanding and empathy.

"...at the center of this play remains a unique, creative glimpse into a too often unexplored realm of the mind."

'Fixed' at Passage Theatre: Friendship vs. mental illness

Philadelphia Inquirer – entertainment— John Timpane

“David Lee White’s *Fixed*, now at the Passage Theatre in Trenton through May 21, is trying to do something valuable and difficult: To tell of friends with mental illness in their midst. When family and society fail, much often falls to friends, and what can they do?”

“As of 2000, Valerie, Ronnie, and Darryl are three high school friends in Trenton. Ronnie and Valerie are “drama geeks,” Darryl a sensitive jock. Ronnie is the glue: Played with wild gusto by Maria Konstantinidis, she’s magnetic, the leader in charge of vision and mischief.

“I like these three. We get their oddfellows-club friendship, readily accept the sexual ambiguities. Norman Meranus’ white/brown/black casting (not called for in the script, but very much Trenton) is ideal, and the troubling flashbacks – Ronnie haunts their dreams – prevent sentimentality.

“Where mental illness is concerned, it’s too easy to be wrong. *Fixed* explores whether anything can ever be right, and, where friends are involved, what “fixed” can even mean”

STAGE REVIEW: David Lee White’s ‘Fixed’ offers insight into mental illness and friendship

By Anthony Stoeckert – The Princeton Packet

“With his new play, “*Fixed*,” David Lee White is aiming to write effectively and believably about mental illness. I’m no expert, but this story rings true, and there is one particularly powerful scene that is stunning, even painful. While mental illness is at the center of “*Fixed*,” being presented by Passage Theatre at the Mill Hill Playhouse in Trenton through May 21, White also writes about friendship, and what our obligations are to those we love.”