

Inspirational and hilarious, CAST aces 'Steambath'

Performance open now through Oct. 16

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Originally written by Bruce Jay Friedman more than 40 years ago, the Carolina Actors' Studio Theatre's (CAST) production of "Steambath" is both highly entertaining and greatly meaningful.

Tandy (Christian Casper) arrives in a limbo between life and afterlife portrayed as a steambath. Upon first sitting next to an "old timer" (Jim Esposito, whose character is reminiscent of Danny DeVito's Louie De Palma from "Taxi"), Tandy is unaware of his own death. Shortly after Tandy meets a ditsy blonde girl (Shannon Wightman-Girard, also the show's choreographer) whose trivial concerns carried over from her life on Earth (Bloomingdale's, Mounds bars) are juxtaposed against Tandy's seemingly more substantial regrets (strained relationship with his 10-year-old daughter, new girlfriend, his next book). Stubborn to give up on his mortality, Tandy becomes determined to get a second chance at rectifying the time he wasted in his life.

When he meets God (J.R. Adduci), Tandy initially refuses to believe the lowly janitor is truly the Almighty — Tandy's doubt frustrates the emotional creator greatly. After a few fairly unconvincing and comical feats to prove his divinity, Tandy eventually tries to convince God to let him return to Earth, and that is where the real fun begins.

God is portrayed as a Puerto Rican steambath attendant who is perhaps slightly crazy and clearly not all-knowing. Instead of the wise omniscient figure most of us would expect, God seems more like a stressed out air traffic controller — except he's not only directing planes in the sky, but also orchestrating every other event on the planet. Adduci's hilarious performance portrays

an idea of what might be those "mysterious ways" in which God is known for working.

Well-conceived and excellently performed characters will keep you entertained throughout the entire play. The main characters are hilarious but so are the other characters who dance, sing and banter, in addition to bringing the story together nicely. Including a wealth-obsessed stockbroker, God's odd assistant Gottlieb (German name meaning God's Love), two gay men (who are nude very briefly) and several others, the supporting cast makes a great contribution to the show.

Even if certain gay stereotypes or

gay slurs — used in perfectly tasteful humor — sometimes make you cringe a little, you will still deeply appreciate

"Steambath." The play begs the question, what if you died *right now*? Would you walk proudly into the light (or disintegrate into oblivion, depending on your beliefs), or would you have regrets? "Steambath" is powerfully profound inspiration to not just live but do so with vigor and drive every single day — because, after all, each day could be your last. ::

Info: "Steambath" is currently on stage. Learn more about the show, get show times and buy tickets at nccast.com.

J.R. Adduci plays the character of God in CAST's production of "Steambath."

Photo Credit: Shannon Hager



Wetherall takes the stage

HIGH POINT — "Queer As Folk" actor, Jack Wetherall, who played Vic Grassi, is appearing in the North Carolina Shakespeare Festival's production of "The Tempest" as Prospero, which ends on Oct. 4.

This classically trained Canadian actor has a litany of credits to his career, but cannot be forgotten in his "QAF" run as Uncle Vic to Hal Spark's Michael Novotny. His cut-to-the-chase demeanor can be best remembered with lines such as, "No sex is fully safe. If it is, you're doing it wrong. There is always an element of risk, but one needs to make it as safe as one possibly can to be responsible, not only for one's own health but for one's partner, as well."

The *High Point Enterprise* reported that Wetherall is able to adjust his presentation to the medium in which he is working, be it in front of a camera, in a small theater or a large venue. However, he is most comfortable on stage. He jumped at the chance to play Prospero, whom he feels is the "great role in Shakespeare and one of the great roles in literature," the *Enterprise* stated. ::

— compiled by Lainey Millen

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