

Ohio, Revisited by The Roadsters at Off Center for the Dramatic Arts

by Abbie T

Full disclosure: This post is also retroactive. I offered my services to Paul Schnabel from Off Center to help add an extension to the Off Center stage. A service for which he paid me, making him my favorite person in Vermont. I promised I would use my payment to buy tickets for the show he was erecting the stage extension for... and I kept my promise.

On Thursday, August 23rd as the rain was pouring down outside, The Husband and I were nice and dry in the cozy Off Center for the Dramatic Arts space at 294 No. Winooski. Right off the bat, I loved this space. It's a small 60 seat black box theater, reminiscent of so many of the Off-Loop theater spaces I grew to love in Chicago. It's a presenting house, meaning anyone can rent it and put up a show, and it's AFFORDABLE! but more about that later.

We came to see *Ohio, Revisited* by The Roadsters. The Roadsters are a group, seemingly based out of the New York City, who describe themselves as theatre practitioners that "convene on a regular basis to practice a bigger way of living and to deepen their understanding of humanity." Comprised of writer/director Cara Scarmak and performers Priscilla Holbrook, Ashley Nease, Stephanie Viola, and Nathan Richard Wagner they mix together an impressive array of original music, storytelling and dance in their performance.

The. Music. Was. Wonderful. Ten original songs performed instrumentally and vocally by the cast with luscious four-part harmony. They could have just sat on stage singing for an hour and I would have been just as entranced. One performer in particular (I'll call her "the blond one" for the program offered no other way to identify her) gave a yummy, bluesy, jazzy, scat-filled performance that the audience wanted to applaud for, but realized that too late and ended up applauding for the next song instead.

To be honest, as much as I enjoyed the movement/dance of the piece and the inventive use of minimal props... I couldn't tell you what the show was about. I think the story was about siblings? Traveling? And at some point they all die? I'm not sure. But the music alone was absolutely worth the price of admission, so I have no regrets.

If you live in NYC, you can catch a performance of *Ohio, Revisited* at Dixon Place on September 6th.

The Awesomesauce

From working with Paul Schnabel, I learned that *Off Center for the Dramatic Arts* is one of the only presenting houses in Burlington that provides a professional but AFFORDABLE performance space for anyone! Off Center has been in it's current home since 2010 but it's members have been collaborating all over the world since the mid-90's! Their website doesn't specifically list a mission but if I had to pick one out it would be this: "**Off Center** was professionally designed and is offered to presenters at a very low rate, with the intent of enabling local groups to do quality work on a limited budget, while allowing theater artists to be paid and theater audiences to afford the price of admission."

The space isn't just for theatrical performances either. It can be rented out for youth classes, stand-up comedy, movie screenings, and one-act festivals...you name it! Now that's something I can get behind. Go see something at Off Center! Present something at Off Center! Get to know the folks who run Off Center!