

From holiday hell to holiday hope

http://hpr1.com/arts/article/from_holiday_hell_to_holiday_hope/Theatre B presents “The Twelve Dates of Christmas”

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By Lauren Housman High Plains Reader

“The Twelve Dates of Christmas,” written by actress Ginna Hoben, is a semi-autobiographical one-woman, one-act comedy that follows a year in the life of a New York City-based actress named Mary.

The play focuses on Mary’s life from one holiday season to the next in a tumultuous and hilarious year marked by holidays, friendships, relationships, and family, as she struggles to move on after she, and everyone she knows, sees her fiancée locking lips with another woman on national television at Mary’s beloved Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade. This kiss is the impetus for Mary’s ensuing year of single life and random, or arranged by her over-the-top Aunt, dates. “Twelve Dates” is merry, amusing, touching and inspiring. Audiences can expect to find something relatable and laughable in Mary and her family and flings.

Christmas is, of course, Mary’s first post-public-dumping hurdle, as she transitions from “that annoying girl with the jingle bell earrings and the leopard print Santa hat” to a full-on Scrooge. She then has to decide how to spend New Year’s Eve, a lonely Valentine’s Day, a drunken St. Patrick’s Day (“I am way too old for one-night stands.

With a bartender. On St. Patrick’s Day.”), then navigate the summertime wedding season as a single woman. All of which leads up to the reliving of that fateful Thanksgiving, commemorating the anniversary of her ex “eat[ing] bad chicken” and skipping the holiday with her family so he could be with another woman, broadcasted all over America. Will Mary spend another Christmas alone, or will she find someone to share her holidays with? After nearly a year of bad but hilarious dates, Mary reflects on whether Destiny plays a part in her love life or whether her own wishful thinking has undone all of her potential relationships—“I wanted aloneness,” Mary explains, “Well, I got it.”

The engaging and expressive Missy Teeters plays Mary, relying on her talents and Ginna Hoben’s well-written monologue to carry the show, which Teeters does quite impressively. Teeters portrays a whole slew of characters from Mary’s life as the play explores her relationships and how holidays influence them. Teeters not only becomes Mary but also enacts the roles of family members, friends, lovers, children, bartenders, stalkers ... everyone she encounters. Her mimicry of voices and delivery of these characters is reminiscent of an effective stand-up comedy routine. Teeters’s believable and relatable performance truly makes the show – it takes a strong actress to perform a play-length monologue with such skill.

An often comedic Greek Chorus of Doo Wop Girls punctuates Teeters’s performance. The girls, played by Lucy Black and Caitlin O’Connell, are pert, pretty, sometimes drunk and always watchful. Their timing is absolutely perfect and often hilarious as they add their wonderful voices and smooth harmonies to Teeters’s scenes and their own transitions. Black and O’Connell each wrote and performed an original song in “Twelve Dates,” making me appreciate their presence all the more.

The show's minimal props (except, of course, a Christmas tree that Mary gradually decorates with ornaments, each a relic commemorating an unsuccessful date or relationship) and smart and simple lighting and sound design are the smooth backdrop to Mary and the Doo Wop Girls' performances. The stagecraft is subtle, appropriate, and, realistic as Theatre B's intimate space is filled with Mary's story. There is no fourth wall; Mary tells her story directly to audiences, even asking for relationship advice at times. Smart costumes and amusing blocking are the topper on this well-lit and -decorated Christmas tree of a tale.

If you're looking for a good laugh, don't miss "The Twelve Dates of Christmas," playing every weekend, now through New Year's at Theatre B. The show is directed by Theatre B ensemble member Blaine Edwards and runs for about an hour and a half, without intermission (I promise, you won't even miss it). I'd suggest only mature audiences attend. Tickets are \$20 for adults; \$10 for students.

Questions and comments: housman87@gmail.com

IF YOU GO:WHAT: "The Twelve Dates of Christmas"WHERE: Theatre B, 716 Main Ave. FargoWHEN: now through Dec. 29; Thursdays-Saturdays, 7:30 p.m.; Sun, Dec. 16 at 2 p.m.TICKETS: theatreb.org/boxoffice.aspx