

'Other Desert Cities'

Wimberley Players deliver emotionally gripping show

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DAILY RECORD FEATURES

Jaws are tight. Faces are flushed. Their eyes have tears. And that's just the audience.

The Wimberley Players' last production of the season is at once clever and heavy, funny and tragic.

"Other Desert Cities" is a play written by Jon Robin Baitz that first opened in 2011.

The Wimberley Players' production is directed by Tracy Arnold. The play starts as a lighthearted family comedy.

Lyman and Polly Wyeth (Whitney Marlett and Jose Shenkner, respectively) live in Palm Springs, California and are spending Christmas Eve with their children, Trip (James Springer) and Brooke (Shelby Miller). Polly's sister, Silda (Cinda Donovan), fresh out of rehab, is also visiting.

Despite playful verbal sparring, it soon becomes apparent that the family has some little-discussed issues.

Brooke hasn't been home in six years after moving to the East Coast and suffering from depression and thoughts of suicide.

There is talk about politics and the Iraq war, of which Brooke, Trip and Silda's views differ starkly.

Then there's the suicide of Henry, Brooke and Trip's older brother, after he committed a terrible crime.

Brooke announces that she



PHOTOS BY JULIE RAY/THE WIMBERLEY PLAYERS

A startling revelation leads toward a stunning finale for "Other Desert Cities." Left to right, Whitney Marlett as Polly, Jose Shenkner as Lyman and Shelby Miller as Brooke.

is getting a book published – a personal memoir of the family's experiences of which they've yet to come to terms.

Brooke holds her parents responsible in part for her brother's death. In turn, they insist she doesn't know the whole story. Trip isn't ready to face his family's trauma.

Polly threatens to never speak to Brooke again if she publishes the book. Lyman asks that she wait to print the book until after he's dead.

The memoir is Brooke's release of the anger and sadness that stemmed from

her brother's death, and she's ready to move on. Not only will the book take the weight of the truth – her version of the truth – off her shoulders, but it's also the best she's ever written, as Trip reluctantly acknowledges.

The story itself turns quickly, from a warm, playful family gathering, to a tense, heart-wrenching scene of a family trying to mend itself and make sense of an open wound.

The acting is spot-on. Their faces are literally flushed, and if Miller wasn't actually crying on stage, it

was impossible to tell.

The show was emotional in many unexpected ways. It's hard to watch the family argue and hurt each other without feeling a tightness in your own chest.

There were points where I almost forgot myself and wanted to interject and argue back.

Though Brooke seems to be the main character with whom the audience is most likely to identify, each has qualities with which we can relate.

The story shows some of the ways in which the differences in our ideals affect



Trip Wyeth (James Springer) reminds his sister, Brooke (Shelby Miller), that he encouraged her to write again after being hospitalized but he didn't expect a hurtful family memoir.



Silda Grauman (Cinda Donovan) and her sister, Polly Wyeth (Whitney Marlett), hold different views of the world and the family's past history.

our lives and how we adopt different truths as a result of our perceptions.

The show is charged with questions and how we deal with inescapable situations

for the ones we love.

This play is not just entertainment, but a look into our own lives, begging us to answer these questions even after leaving the theater.

Get in the Christmas spirit on tour of homes



PHOTOS BY NEW BRAUNFELS REPUBLICAN WOMEN

This year's New Braunfels Republican Women's 22nd Annual Christmas Tour of Homes, scheduled for Dec. 5, includes an interesting blend of lovely historic and more contemporary houses to suit everyone's tastes for the holiday season.



This photo offers a glimpse into the cozy, luxurious interior of one of the homes on the annual Christmas Tour of Homes taking place on Dec. 5 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in New Braunfels.

If you're feeling like old Scrooge himself, then let the New Braunfels Republican Women lift your spirits and get you in a festive mood with their 22nd annual Christmas Tour of Homes scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 5 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

With a mixture of historic and more contemporary homes, there are several stops on the tour. You can glean decorating and design tips to deck your own halls.

Tickets are \$15 and can be purchased at www.nbrw.com, or at The Crossing, Johnson Furniture and the New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce. For more information, email ChristmasTOH@nbrw.com or call (830) 629-0629.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Computer Classes
WHEN: Nov. 18, 10 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.
WHERE: San Marcos Public Library
WHO: Free introductory computer classes in email, Internet searching, Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel for adults.
INFO: (512) 393-8200 to register.

How to Use Your iPad or Tablet Class
WHEN: Nov. 18, 10 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.
WHERE: San Marcos Public Library
WHO: Get started with your iPad or tablet.
INFO: (512) 393-8200 to register.

Free Music Concert: Him & Her
WHEN: Nov. 18, 7 p.m.
WHERE: San Marcos Public Library
WHO: Enjoy a local bluesy, jazzy, folksy duo perform their music.
INFO: (512) 393-8200

Overdrive eBook Help
WHEN: Nov. 19, 10:30 a.m.
WHERE: San Marcos Public Library
WHO: Get help accessing the library's eBook collection on your mobile device.
INFO: (512) 393-8200

Transgender Day of Remembrance
WHEN: Nov. 19, 7 p.m.
WHERE: 510 N. Guadalupe, UCM Wesley Building
WHO: An event sponsored by Transcend at Texas State, PFLAG San Marcos and San Marcos Unitarian Universalist Fel-

lowship for all of the San Marcos and Texas State community to observe Transgender Day of Remembrance, to explore transgender lives, and to memorialize the Trans lives lost to violence. Featuring Ms Dee Dee Waters of Houston performing a dramatic monologue honoring and representing trans lives, music by SMUUF musicians, a city proclamation presented by Mayor Daniel Guerrero, and personal stories from members of Transcend.
INFO: Email trans.txst@yahoo.com or go to <https://www.facebook.com/>

Teen Philosophy
WHEN: Nov. 19, 5:15 p.m.
WHERE: San Marcos Public Library
WHO: Ages 12 to 17 interested in discussion with philosophers from Texas State.
INFO: (512) 393-8200

VFW Post 3413 and Auxiliary Meeting
WHEN: Nov. 19, 7 p.m., potluck, 6:30 p.m.
WHERE: 1701 Hunter Rd.
WHO: VFW/Auxiliary members and anyone interested in joining.
INFO: (512) 665-5668.

Puppet Show: Cornucopia Caper: A Thanksgiving Story
WHEN: Nov. 20, 10 and 11 a.m.
WHERE: San Marcos Public Library
WHO: The library puppeteers will perform a story just right for children age 2 and older.
INFO: (512) 393-8200

VFW Post 3413 Friday Morning Breakfast
WHEN: Nov. 20, 8 a.m.
WHERE: 1701 Hunter Rd.
WHO: Veterans and their spouses.
INFO: (512) 665-5668

Hecho A Mano - Mercado Artesano
WHEN: Nov. 21, 9 a.m.
WHERE: Centro Cultural Hispano de San Marcos, 211 Lee Street.
INFO: (512) 878-0640.

13th Annual Thankful Turkey 5K Run/Walk
WHEN: Nov. 21, 7:30 a.m.
WHERE: Texas State University's Freeman Ranch
WHO: San Marcos Bluebonnet Lions Club
INFO: www.e-clubhouse.org/sites/san_marcos_bluebonnet or call (512) 268-2610.

Geronimo VFW Sunday Country Dance
WHEN: Nov. 22, 3 p.m.; kitchen opens at 2 p.m.
WHERE: Geronimo VFW, 6808 North Highway 123, Geronimo
WHO: Glenn Collins and Alibi Band will play classic country dance music. \$8 donation. Non-smoking hall and open to all.

ESL Conversation Club
WHEN: Nov. 23, 10 a.m.
WHERE: San Marcos Public Library
WHO: English language learners practice speaking and listening in English.
INFO: (512) 393-8200

Thanksgiving Eve Church Service
WHEN: Nov. 25, 7 p.m.
WHERE: Grace Lutheran Church, 1250 Belvin St., San Marcos
INFO: (512) 392-4241