



Dysfunction in Texas brings big belly laughs

Greg Smith/Corbin Theatre



Mamma died and the family gathers to fight over whether or not to bury her in her mink stole, you know, the kind with glass eyes and the mouth is the clip.

Sweltering heat, family arguments, public embarrassment about mamma dying in a sleazy motel room while having an affair with a man with two wooden legs, while everyone's dirty laundry surfaces makes "Sordid Lives" the comedy event of the season for the Corbin Theatre in Liberty, Missouri.



Del Shores comedic play brings a family together for a funeral of their matriarch. But with the zany characters collecting, so too are the family squabbles. As the squabbles continue, the heart of each character surfaces. Their thoughts, lifestyles, missteps, and troubles add to the dysfunction. A focus on LGBT lives in 1996 in a Baptist town permeates the theme. A positive forward movement unfolds.

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The story takes place in a small town in Texas where everyone knows everyone else's business. Gossip and stories spread as fast as the tumbling tumbleweeds blow. Mamma's family includes two daughters, one prissy and proper; one daughter wild and free wheeling; and one son who lives a vicarious life in a mental institution for believing he is the embodiment of Tammy Wynette. Along with that, Mamma has a sister at whose house the family convenes.

The show includes a friendly neighbor whose husband had the affair with Mamma and was present when she fell and died in his motel room. Two brothers (one the local bartender), a

local heavy drinking older lady, a psychologist hell bent on reforming a drag queen, a grandson trying to live an open gay lifestyle, and a Country-Western singer who introduces several scenes.



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The calamity of problems begins with the singer introducing the audience to the situations about to follow as the gay grandson explains his plight to be free of shame as he learns of his grandmother's death. Then, the story shifts to Texas as others come to visit Sissy and the dysfunction erupts like a volcanic explosion.

The scene is set and the characters are all in place, just like an Agatha Christie novel—with each character being over-the-top, but the kind of person you may know. The sanity is delivered by Ty, the grandson. The rest is outright insanity.

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Sit back, travel back in time to small town Texas, and prepare

to laugh throughout this comedy of simple people discovering their genuine love for each other while they overcome the obstacles that divide them. The show is humorous, laugh out loud funny. The actors portray their characters as real people and not caricatures or stereotypes. The elements of love, forgiveness, and acceptance leave the audience with genuine happiness as they exit.



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“Sordid Lives” opened Saturday, Aug.18 and runs for one more weekend. By the discussion at intermission and after the show, the remaining performances could sell out. Do not miss your chance to see this comedy sensation.

The elements necessary for a solid production all show in this play. The costumes are fun; the script is solid; the characters are well-developed; the actors are great; the lighting and sound in such a small space is very good; the set is beautiful and well designed. One could not ask for a better theatre experience.

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The cast performs as a ensemble and blend well with each other. One can tell that the actors are enjoying every minute of stage time and the audiences reception. The cast features a variety of ages and experience, but because of the strong direction and characterizations, one cannot tell beginners for seasoned professionals. They are marvelous.

This show deserves to be extended. It's that good. S Do not miss your chance to see it.



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The Production team is: Greg Smith, director; Hannah Jahal, assistant director; Caleb Bailey, stage manager; Derek Pettus, sound and light operator; Laura Warren Barge, musical input; Caleb Bailey, Greg Smith set construction, Kim Smith, set construction; Kylan Smith, set construction; Niki Kruse, set construction; Derek Pettus, set construction; Jane Boswell, special costumes.

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The cast is: Philip C. Bachus as Reverend Barnes, Kitty Corum as Dr. Eve Bolinger, Dustin Danner as Wardell Owens, Maggie Dunn as Noletta Nethercott, Mitchell Flottman as Odel Owens; Chris LaCour as G. W. Nethercott, Laura LaCour as Latrelle Williamson, Linda Levin as Sissy Hickey, Martha Lyon as Juanita McElroy, Connor Macapagal as Ty Williamson, Colonsay Selby as LaVonda Dupree, Jeremy Walter as Earl Don (a.k.a. Brother Boy), Heather Wolesky as Bisty Mae Harling.

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