

Alabama Rain

Heather McCutchen's semi-absurdist theatrical myth about an imaginary Southern town where time literally stands still—and where it hasn't rained for forty years—tends to get suffocated by its own obvious allegorical musings. The five eccentric sisters who live in this ambition-stifling wasteland experience, not surprisingly, a drought of the spirit. The eldest, Pheenie, embarks on a journey of self-nourishment so she can drink in a world far removed from her backwards rural existence. The high-strung Laurie Laurie drops dead, but her "living" corpse refuses to be buried. Monty Louise got pregnant as a teenager and has remained in that uncomfortable state for several years. The playwright capitalizes on the Southern belle Insanity conventions fostered by William Faulkner, Tennessee Williams and Carson McCullers. But, when used merely as a device to hammer home the idea of letting go the ghosts of one's past and accepting change, these loopy contrivances come across as shallow and forced. Director Christina Martin guides her cast in an uproariously comedic direction (with spunky performances by Heather Hartley and Autumn Lakosky). Yet the more pensive, sturdy portrayals of Rae Butcher and Carlyne Haycraft poignantly wrap the play's structural flaws in unassuming dignity. (Lucia Mauro)

Wing & Groove Theatre, 1935 1/2 W. North, Flat Iron Building, (773)782-9416. Fri-Sat 8:30pm/Sun 7pm. Benefit show July 22, 8pm (\$25). \$15. \$12 students/seniors. Through Aug 15.