

## ABQJournal Online » The Irish can always use cheering up

The Irish play “Is Life Worth Living?” takes a comedic look at the effect tragic plays have on a previously happy seaside village.

Director Brian Hansen, a longtime drama professor at the University of New Mexico, says the play, written by Lennox Robinson, “pokes fun at the depressive side of Irish comedy.”

“It’s charming,” he says.

He saw a production of the play two years ago at the Shaw Festival in Niagara on the Lake, Ontario. “It’s wonderful. It’s fun to seek out scripts that are not often done and very challenging.”

Robinson, who lived from 1892 to 1954, produced the play, first called “Drama at Inish,” in 1933 at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, Ireland, famous for its revival of Irish drama.

In the play, a hotel owner, played by Phil Shortell, and his wife, played by Heather Lovick-Tolley, contract with a theater company in hopes of attracting more visitors to their seaside village.

Flamboyant Hector de la Mare, portrayed by Ned Record, and his wife, the intense Constance Constanza, played by Joni Lloyd, head the company and bring more drama to the village than its inhabitants can handle.

“They are devoted to the dark continental playwrights – Tolstoy, Ibsen and Strindberg,” Hansen says.

The villagers are won over by the “power of darkness” after looking at topics they rarely considered: murder, arson, depression, madness and more. Soon the locals “begin looking at themselves and the truth of their small-town life.”

The play has fun with the pretentious actors and the villagers who are new to suicidal tendencies, forgetting to have enough change for the gas meter or jumping off the pier at low tide.

### **If you go**

**WHAT:** “Is Life Worth Living?”

**WHEN:** Friday, March 23, through April 15, with performances at 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays

**WHERE:** Adobe Theater, 9813 Fourth NW

**HOW MUCH:** \$15 adults, \$13 seniors and students. For reservations, visit [www.adobetheater.com](http://www.adobetheater.com) or call 898-9222 on weekdays

“Is Life Worth Living?” is the last of five plays of the Southwest Irish Play Festival.

“When you think of the size of Ireland and the amount of playwrights it’s produced, its contribution to literature is absolutely amazing,” Hansen says.

The idea of staging Irish plays around St. Patrick’s Day has been well received by audiences and other local theaters: “Instead of competing, the theaters are all cooperating. By now, we’re all speaking with a bit of a brogue.”

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