

arts & culture

Audience Moved By Studio's 'These Shining Lives'

The play tells the true story of "the radium girls," featuring the strength and friendship of four women.

By LEAH SHEWMAKER
Daily Sun Staff Writer

The cast and crew shone bright during The Studio Theatre Tierra Del Sol's last opening night of the 2022-23 season.

It was clear how much care and effort went into the production, from the actors' performances to well-thought details in lighting and staging.

"I think The Studio's work is amazing and is at such a high level," said Jackie Galloway, of Fruitland Park. "I loved the show. It moved me — I'm still crying."

The play "These Shining Lives" is based on the true story of the women who worked at the Radium Dial Company in the 1920s.

The story follows Catherine Donohue (Ashleigh Ann Gardner), Charlotte (Clare Lopez), Frances (Robin Dunavant) and Pearl (Cayla L. Jones), who are hired to paint watch faces with the recently discovered element, radium.

Over the next several years,

the women begin to notice mysterious problems within the company.

The women, now an inseparable group, decide to fight against the corporation that exploited them and put their health and lives in jeopardy.

While audience's hearts may break, this show highlights friendship, love, courage and hope.

Audiences can see "These Shining Lives" at 2 and 7 p.m. select dates through April 29 at The Studio Theatre. Tickets start at \$35 and are available at thevillagesentertainment.com or any Villages Box Office location.

"It was incredible — a real eyeopener," said Bill Brown, of the Village of Charlotte. "I knew stuff like this went on, but this show brought it to life."

He said he and his group of friends maintained their Studio Theatre subscriptions since the theater opened, and make a point to share their thoughts after each show.

Rochelle Senholzi, one of the friends in the group, said this production moved her.

"My heart is still aching," said Senholzi, of the Village of Bonita. "It brought to light how women were treated as dispensable. It's women like these who gave us a better future with rights and equal pay."



Submitted photos

Above: Ashleigh Ann Gardner, from left, Cayla L. Jones, Robin Dunavant and Clare Lopez portray four women who work for the Radium Dial Company in "These Shining Lives" at The Studio Theatre Tierra Del Sol. Below: Ashleigh Ann Gardner plays Catherine Donohue and Joe Metcalf portrays Tom Donohue in "These Shining Lives."



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She said she related to Catherine Donohue, but thought each of the actors brought the characters to life.

"With a theater in the round setup, I can really see the actors faces," Senholzi said.

Galloway said she didn't know the story before coming to see the show.

The actors were superb, and felt very natural in their characters.

They helped the audience invest in the story and fall in love with the characters.

"Everyone did such a good job," Galloway said. "They are all so talented."

At times during the show, the use of black light and a green glow represented the radioactive material.

The lighting also included special effects like camera flashes that made elements of the story really come to life.

"The lighting was awesome," Galloway said. "I noticed a glow that added something a little extra."

Other details, like the sound from the radio on stage, subtle background street noise and sounds of waves while the characters spent the day on the shore, also added to the show. The effects enveloped the audience into the story with a simple and functional set featuring a simple wood floor, a window and coat racks.

Rolling tables were moved to set scenes in the Donohue's home, the workplace and courtrooms.

Each piece of the production came together to honor "the radium girls," as they came to be known, and tell their story.