

# The City Paper

## TN Rep opens 22nd season with *Three Days of Rain*

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Where would the theater be without dysfunctional families? From William Shakespeare on down the line, playwrights have long drawn inspiration from familial turmoil. But don't mistake Richard Greenberg's Pulitzer Prize-nominated *Three Days of Rain* as just another fractured family saga. This play has much more to offer.

The story opens in a somewhat dingy, unoccupied Manhattan loft in 1995. Walker, an emotionally scarred drifter, is meeting his sister Nan to settle the estate of their father, a wealthy and accomplished architect. Nan greets her brother with a mix of anger and relief. It seems Walker disappeared without a trace nearly a year ago, presumably unable to deal with his grief.

But now he is back, and along with Nan and their childhood friend Pip (the son of their father's business partner, Theo), Walker is ready to face the past. Armed with his father's journal, he constructs a bitter, if logical, interpretation of the family history.

Act II takes place in the same New York loft in 1960. Here the actors portray the parents of Walker, Nan and Pip, offering a far different version of the story we have just heard in Act I. As the mystery unwinds, secrets are revealed and family legacies — both financial and emotional — are explained.

Full of humor and heart-wrenching drama, *Three Days of Rain* offers a tremendous showcase for three outstanding performers. David Alford is a pleasure to watch — manic but witty as the intellectual Walker. But he is more moving as Ned, a brilliant artist crippled not only by a terrible stutter but also by his lack of confidence.

Shelean Newman also is especially good in the second act, transforming herself from the reserved Nan to the flamboyant and tragically fragile mother Lina.

Ross Brooks rounds out the cast in the dual roles of Pip/Theo. Brooks embraces the part of Pip with boyish charm and unshakable optimism. And while he certainly holds his own in terms of talent, I found it difficult to believe that Brooks is the same age as Alford and Newman.

Casting issues aside, the performances are excellent. And Greenberg's dialogue is exquisite. *Three Days of Rain* reminds us of the very real influence the past can have on our future. It's a powerful story that will stay with you long after the lights come up.