



REVIEW: 'SAVANNAH SIPPING SOCIETY' OPENS AT THEATRE JACKSONVILLE

👤 Dick Kerekes & Leisla Sansom 🕒 November 6, 2018 📁 Dual Critics, Feature, On Stage, San Marco, Theatre, Theatre Reviews 👁️ 202 Views

Hillary Hickam

Theatre Jacksonville opened the first production of its 99 season on November 2 with *The Savannah Sipping Society*. It will run through November 18th at 2032 San Marco Ave. Call 904-396-4425 for reservations.

This play is by the writing team of Jessie Jones, Nicholas Hope and Jamie Wooten or better known as Jones Hope Wooten. These three former TV sitcom writers have created their comedy scenarios for several years and their combined plays have close to 4,000 performances. Two of their plays are well known to Jacksonville audiences, *The Dixie Swim Club* at the Alhambra Theatre and *Always a Bridesmaid* right here at Theatre Jacksonville.

This is a comedy about four unattached mature women who meet by chance in Savannah, Georgia and spend the next six months developing deep friendships. Three of them met briefly at an exercise gym, then move on to the lovely home owned by Randa Covington and a fourth woman joins them in their “sipping” sessions of various alcoholic drinks as they plan various adventures together.

Abigail Hunger, Hillary Hickam and Kelley Norman

Hillary Hickam is Randa, a very qualified professional architect who is currently out of a job and income. She owns the very lovely house that has a veranda where most of the action takes place. The set by TJ Designer and Technical Tim Watson is gorgeous and you will want to move in. Ms. Hickam’s home is in Jacksonville but she has performed on stage and in film all over the USA. Jacksonville audiences have seen her remarkable performances as Marsha in *Vanya and Sonia and Marsha and Spike* and as Karen in *August, Osage County* at Players by the Sea.

Kelley Norman is Dot, the most senior of the four women. Dot is a widow and recently lost her husband and now worries about retirement. Mrs. Norman is very convincing in this role. She has been a teacher in Macclenny, Florida for 38 and one of the mainstays of the Baker County Community Theatre. Theatre audiences are very familiar with her daughter Sara Beth Summers an award winning actress on Jacksonville stages.

Marlafaye, the woman who moved to Savannah from Texas is played by Abigail Hunger in her 3rd performance at Theatre Jacksonville. As Lala she was the funniest actor in *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*. Then in a complete reversal, she was the very serious Anne Boleyn in *Wolf Hall*. She is back to her unique comic ways in this show and is very funny, as a women who lost her dentist husband to his pretty much younger dental hygienist but is planning her revenge on her ex husband. Miss Hunger dresses strangely in this role and has long black hair that looks like a dead squirrel.

Kelley Norman, Sommer Farhat, Hillary Hickam

Actress Sommer Farhat is Jinx, a life coach who plans many of the adventures taken by these four ladies. Ms. Farhat has been in many plays on TJ's stage, both comedy and serious roles. She has a role of some authority in this play; she speaks in a clear voice that is remarkable that came in loud and clear to me sitting beyond the middle of the theatre.

One final cast member has a cameo role as Grandmother Covington that is comic and brief. Barbara Stevenson is line perfect since she has no dialogue at all.

Jason Collins directed this play and the program listed his many directing accomplishments all over this city. He is also a fine actor and has performed in variety of roles and he really loves comedy. Jason is a member of the inprov group, the Awkward Silence.

Abigail Hunger, Sommer Farhat, Kelley Norman and Hillary Hickam

This show marks the Jacksonville debut of Costume Designer, Amanda Moore, who went to school in Gainesville and her costume accomplishments are well known there. She will be back, she is good. Miss Moore had these ladies changing clothing many times to show the passage of 6 months time in their lives. And I was impressed with the wardrobe selections for everyone.

The open night audience consisted of mainly married couples who loved this show and laughed long and hard all evening long. As I sat there, I thought it was exciting to be drawn into a comedy in which female characters are the driving force. 2018 is truly the year of the women. Many are running for political offices all over the country. Women have exercised their rights in the work place! This play is funny and shows us the potency and

power of friendships in our lives. Don't miss this show; it is well worth a little over 2 hours of your time.

