

ST THOMAS TIMES-JOURNAL (July 24, 2010)

## Sarah Quick comedy receives standing ovation on opening night

### Knickers poignant and funny

A generous dose of Canadiana with depth and heart make for a well-knit comedy - - literally -- in the current offering at Port Stanley Festival Theatre.

A standing ovation was the end result as Knickers: A Brief Comedy opened to a capacity crowd Thursday.

Written by popular playwright Sarah Quick and directed by theatre veteran Simon Joynes, Knickers recounts the story of a fictional Northern Ontario town called Elliston Falls.

The community is in the depths of despair after the local mill shuts down, throwing many of the townsfolk out of work.

As the story opens, we come to know Barb, played by Susan Johnston Collins, Terri (Liz Gillroy) and Mary (Martha Zimmerman). The ladies gather for regular Weight Watchers meetings, which serve as an opportunity to down bottles of beer while eating chips and pondering life in a depressed community.

"You feel guilty about having fun when you might lose your home," Mary says at one point.

This is poignantly highlighted by monologues from each actress to both inform us of their characters, and tug at our heart strings. A tale of job loss is something St. Thomas area residents know all too well and the timeliness and treatment in Knickers elevates the play beyond a mere kneeslapper.

Things begin to change with the arrival of Amanda, played by Danielle Nicole, a globe-trotting woman hired as a tourism officer by the town.

After stumbling into a Weight Watchers meeting one night, she's soon downing suds with the lovely ladies, but instead of wallowing, Amanda becomes a catalyst for change that prompts the women into action.

And what's the solution to their dilemma?

Well, the title says it all, but you'll have to check out the production itself to find out more.

**Knickers works because it has just the right mix of comedy and heart to make it compelling.** We easily identify with the women, their problems on the home front and their efforts to raise both themselves, and their neighbours, out of their rut. This is due in large part to the performances of Collins, Gillroy, Zimmerman and Nicole, who not only embody the heart and soul of the small town woman, but

move flawlessly back and forth between dozens of smaller, but no less important, characters.

And, let's not forget about the many Canadian references scattered through the play, which distinctively marks Knickers as a product of the Great White North. Frequent use of the word "eh," bottles of Labatt 50 and reference to our national icon, Tim Hortons, bring a smile to one's face.

**But don't be fooled into thinking this comedy is solely for the fairer sex. Knickers has plenty of laughs, including a few big ones, that appeal equally to both genders.**

The play also takes a gentle, satirical poke at a variety of topics from gossiping seniors to municipal baffle-gab, folksy small-town mannerisms and a handful of TV interviews that rank among the play's many highlights.

And, of course, you'll never think of the song I Will Survive in the same light again. On that note, if you're going, best leave the kids at home. Knickers may leave you in stitches, but it's definitely for-adults-only fare.