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## South of Broadway dives into engaging elements of 'Stay'

By Matthew Dobie Special to The Post and Courier 22 hrs ago



"Stay" will be presented through March 10 at South of Broadway Theatre Company in North Charleston. The cast includes (left) Kristen Kos as Leanne, David Moon as Mark, Rob Maniscalco as Ben and Linda Fish as Sandra. Photo provided by Anne Reid.

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South of Broadway Theatre Company's current production is the regional premiere of the contemporary drama/thriller "Stay," written by Sheila Cowley.

The play centers on the relationship of LEEANNE and MARK. They got married in college, but 20 years later, their bond is beginning to fracture. Says Cowley, "It's about one person changing and another person not changing. Can you hang onto life the way it is at this moment and just keep it that way? Is it possible? Are people going to change despite what you try to do?"

"Stay" is not your run-of-the-mill romance. Not even close. It's a dark and twisting tale, with Hitchcockian overtones.

South of Broadway's Artistic Director Kristen Kos personally handpicked "Stay" for production.

"There are elements (in 'Stay') that are very engaging, very surprising, and dark, which I gotta say, I really love," says Kos. "I've had a few people say they think it's very cathartic, but it's not necessarily an uplifting show. I personally don't need that when I go see theater. I want my theater to feel like art."

Kos also was intrigued by the technical aspects of the show. It's a very sound-driven production, with thunderstorms descending and receding.

"It gave our design team a lot of things to work with," says Kos. "The lights were interesting. We have these cool projections. The entire set is black and then a light falls on it (resembling) a cloudscape or a rainstorm. It's just magical."

The show is directed by Daniel Hall Kuhn.

"I knew I wanted to bring Daniel in as a director," says Kos. "He's extremely talented. He pushes actors, but gently. He gets people out of their comfort zones to scoop around other ideas. It works out really well."

And Kos would know something about the style of Kuhn's directing. She's starring in "Stay" in the role of LEEANNE.

"I feel this character has really allowed me to be extremely expressive," she says. "That being said, it's a very different experience being a performer on this piece, because it has a lot of darker elements. Meditating on how to create this character or the path that happens for these characters can be a little heavy."

That weight isn't lost on the audience. Nor are the darker elements, as evidenced by the response of some of the theatregoers on opening night.

Playwright Cowley traveled to Charleston to attend opening night.

"I was a little shocked when somebody came up to me (after the show) and basically told me they didn't expect me to be such a nice person," she said.

"Stay" was Cowley's first play, originally produced by the Wimberley Players in Wimberley, Texas, in 2013. And nothing she's written since is all that similar to "Stay," so it's been an interesting experience revisiting it.

"I hadn't even thought about it for several years," says Cowley. "It was good to come back and see it now. (South of Broadway) did such a beautiful job. If you work with good people, it's always better than you hoped."

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## If you go

What: "Stay," a contemporary drama/thriller by Sheila Cowley

When: 7:30 p.m. March 1-3, 5, 8-10; 3 p.m. March 4

Where: South of Broadway Theatre Company, 1080 E. Montague Ave., North Charleston

Price: \$25

More Info: 843-745-0317, [southofbroadway.com](http://southofbroadway.com)

