

September 20, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

I'm a stage director (and former artistic director of the Milwaukee Repertory Theater as well as former director of the theater program at Sarah Lawrence College) who, some years back, directed the premiere of David Rambo's break-out play, GOD'S MAN IN TEXAS, at ATL's Humana Festival.

On a trip to Los Angeles a couple years ago, David and I got together for dinner and he told me he'd finished an adaptation of Sinclair Lewis' classic, *BABBIT*. I eagerly asked if I could read it and then approached the University of North Carolina School of the Arts about staging its premiere there. I knew they would have a talented crew eager to tackle a large-cast drama, but I also knew there would be one particular and difficult challenge: who could play the iconic George Babbitt? Who could embody the self-righteous conformist who dreams of rebellion? And who could make us care for Lewis' anti-hero while still being able to embody Lewis' satire?

My worries ended when Devon Diffenderfer walked into the audition hall. Then and to greater depth in the rehearsals that followed, Devon found inventive ways to realize Babbitt's mealy-mouthed personality while keeping an audience focused on his ineffectual struggle to find some kind of life of his own.

Devon works carefully and with total focus (you won't find him texting on a break!) and his choices grow stronger, the stakes higher, the more he understood the character.

His "All-American" likeability (think Henry Fonda/Tom Hanks) is a huge asset in taking the audience with him. Even when a character like Babbitt doesn't elicit our sympathy, Devon makes them want to know what's going to happen next.

Parts of this production were very physical and Devon handled those assignments with aplomb. He's an unusual actor with an unusual name and persona (and as tall and thin as the proverbial beanpole). I think, with additional and rigorous training, he can use that great presence of his to create more memorable performances like the one he did so masterfully for me.

Sincerely yours,

John Dillon
JADillonWA@aol.com