

## Theater Review: 'The Effect' is just what the doctor ordered at Gamm Theatre

By Kathie Raleigh Special to the Independent  
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Gamm Theatre opened its 40th season with a production of 'The Effect' by Lucy Prebble. The play, which is directed by Steve Kidd, runs through October 13. Pictured above are cast members Anthony T. Goss as Tristan and Gabrielle McCauley as Connie.

Photo Courtesy: Gamm Theatre/Cat Laine

WARWICK, R.I. — “The Effect,” by Lucy Prebble, which opens the 40th season at the Sandra Feinstein Gamm Theatre, has a deceptively simple premise: Two young adults volunteer for a clinical trial of a new antidepressant, and when they fall madly in love, they — and the researchers — question whether their love is “real” or a side effect of the drug.

The idea is intriguing, but Prebble takes it to unexpected depths, mind-blowing directions and heart-rending intensity in just 90 minutes. We don’t watch this production, we experience it.

The experience comes courtesy of an impeccable four-member cast and unerring direction by Steve Kidd. The side effects of these outstanding performances are ideas, images and emotions that are hard to shake.

The volunteer subjects are Tristan and Connie, who are on opposite sides of their real-vs-chemical attraction. Tristan seems to know his feelings are the former. Connie, a psychology major in college, is more in the chemical camp. As they flirt and explore their feelings, actors Anthony T. Goss and Gabrielle McCauley are so natural and engaging, we can’t help but hope love, whatever the source, conquers all.

Overseeing the drug trial are Dr. Toby Sealey, a psychiatrist played with optimistic aplomb by the excellent Stephen Thorne, a Trinity Repertory Company actor making his Gamm debut, and Dr. Lorna James, in a nuanced performance by Jeanine Kane.

Dr. Sealey’s father was a heart surgeon, who apparently disapproved of his son’s choice. The younger doctor countered that a heart surgeon is like “the plumber of the body. I want to be the explorer.” His explorations have led him to promoting drug treatments.

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