

LAST GAS

by Scott Andrews

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Actor-playwright John Cariani grew up in Presque Isle and is now a big wheel in New York theatrical circles. His latest play, redolent of Aroostook atmosphere, is titled “Last Gas.” It’s running through Sunday in Lewiston.

Anti-heroes and twisted relationships are the stuff of John Cariani’s dramatic world. And in two of the three plays that he has written, that offbeat fictional world is set in Aroostook County.

Cariani, who lived in Presque Isle for most of his childhood, rose to fame in 2004 when his first play “Almost, Maine,” became an international hit, translated into 20 languages and produced by more than 2,500 theater companies.

“Last Gas” is his latest effort, and a fine fully professional production runs through Sunday in Lewiston.

The setting is a rural convenience store not far from the Canadian border. The confused and conflicted anti-hero is the 40-year-old proprietor of the store, and he’s romantically torn between two women and one man. The first woman is the mother of his teenage son, while the other is an old flame from high school days. He’s also attached to an overweight truck driver who shares his passion for the Boston Red Sox.

Janet Mitchko gets stellar performances from her fully professional cast of six: Augustus Kelley, Brandon Tyler Harris, Ben Loving, Kurt Zischke, Katharine McLeod and Mary Mossberg.

Jennifer Madigan’s set, authentically recalling Maine’s rural culture, is also outstanding.