

## Irish home health aides' antics amuse in 'Fly Me to the Moon'

The dark comedy runs through Sunday at Lewiston's Public Theatre.

**By April Boyle**  
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We've all had bad days, and those who work in health care are definitely not immune. For Irish caregivers Loretta Mackie (Amy Griffin) and Francis Shields (Annie Edgerton), a rotten day turns into dark comedy fodder in "Fly Me to the Moon" as the innocuous words "just hear me out" lead the financially strapped co-workers down a morally suspect rabbit hole.

Irish playwright Marie Jones returns to the two-hander formula that she previously employed in her award-winning 1996 play "Stones in His Pockets."

In addition to having just two main characters, like that play, "Fly Me to the Moon" is set in a small town in Ireland, where unemployment and class inequality are prevalent. Loretta's husband is a laid-off bricklayer, and she is struggling to pay for her daughter's school activities. Francis' son, who was kicked out of school, has started a DVD bootlegging business.

The mismatched women are the daytime home health aides for an elderly stroke patient, Davy McGee, whose life has been reduced to three simple pleasures – reading the Daily Mail newspaper, listening to Frank Sinatra and playing the ponies.

When an unfortunate accident befalls "wee Davy" on their watch, Loretta and Francis fall victim to the irresistible lure of his 120-pound pension and his unexpected racetrack windfall from betting on the horse named Fly Me to the Moon. After all, Davy would have wanted them to have it, right?

Griffin and Edgerton don ambiguous Irish accents to bring the timid Loretta and brash Francis to life on the Public Theatre's stage. They deliver strong performances, with their funniest moments stemming from over-the-top physical comedy that often highlights their notable height difference. Among the dark comedy, both manage to strike an emotional chord, such as Loretta's fear that her pride-deprived husband is slipping away before her eyes.

Although "Fly Me to the Moon" definitely has its share of amusing moments, particularly in the first act, it struggles to hold the laughs and audience sympathies as the rabbit hole becomes more and more improbable and the caregivers' conflicted choices increasingly asinine. The suspense wanes in the second act, causing the contrived plot to drag as the characters spiral out of control.

That said, the Public Theatre offers an amusing take on Jones' dark farce that's full of underlying irony. The two-member cast tweaks the funny bone with well-executed antics, and with winter only halfway over, who couldn't use a little humor to help lighten the remaining dark, cold days?



Amy Griffin and Annie Edgerton are cast as Irish home health care aides in "Fly Me to the Moon." Photo courtesy of The Public Theatre