

REVIEW  
'NOURISH THE BEAST'

# Groves Cabin Theatre has yet another winner

BY DON MASLOWSKI  
SPECIAL TO THE DESERT SUN

The little theater that could, does again.

It's not just that the 24-seat Groves Cabin Theatre in the hinterland of Morongo Valley attracts wonderful talent. It's also the plays they select to showcase those talents. Take their latest.

"Nourish the Beast" is a dark, twisted comedy paradoxically seated in the spectrum of human emotions. It's the dark cloud and silver lining, rolled into one. Written by the late Steve Tesich, better known for his 1980 Oscar-winning screenplay for "Breaking Away" and the quirky "The World According to Garp," it's a prime example of the types of chances this theater takes with plays.

Vicki Montgomery is Goya, matriarch of an extended family of flotsam and jetsam. Her husbands have a way of dying on her, so she interviews prospective replacements while the current one is still alive. In fact, her present spouse Mario (Ken Lindsey) has placed the most recent ad. Supposedly, he's dying, too.

People come and go. They have faults. Most are strange; some, outright bizarre. But surely the alternative is worse. Someone, anyone, is better than no one, isn't it?

Co-directors Steve Fuji and Joy Groves have assembled a solid cast from which they elicit memorable performances.

Warren Lavender is mean, crotchety and unforgettable as the Old Man who answers one of the ads for husband but, because of his age, accepts a counter-offer to be Grandpa, a title he nonetheless abhors.

The moments you'll take home with you include any with Donette Swain. She turns in an award-winning performance as Goya's bohemian, free spirit daughter, Sylvia. She sets the stage ablaze with subtle shtick and nuance.

Montgomery, Lindsey and Tim Poppell as Goya's cop son, Bruno, all excel in offering real, eccentric people, though Lindsey's lengthy diatribes as Mario could benefit by snappier pacing.

With intuitive direction and sharply delineated characters capturing the essence of the off-kilter story, "Nourish the Beast" is another artistic feather in the already crowded theatrical hat of Groves Cabin Theatre.