

"Evie's Waltz" at the Magic Theatre



"Are we going to talk about the gun?" says red-haired, 16-year-old Evie, maybe ten minutes into the play, and from that moment on Carter W. Lewis's 'Evie's Waltz' becomes a parent's nightmare of nightmares.

Evie is Danny's girl friend, and Danny is Gloria and Clay's son. Though we don't ever see Danny, he is the major player in this psychodrama, and his presence is constant, because Danny has hidden himself in the poison ivy thicket above the house, from which vantage point he is pointing a rifle at the barbecue area in his parents' backyard. This means that Evie, Gloria and Clay are in his gun sight at all times, which is an astonishingly good method to create tension. The kid is crazy. He could do anything.

Danny has two ways to communicate: he texts Evie on her cell phone, or fires his rifle at the patio, causing everyone to run for cover. Danny has been suspended from school for carrying a gun to protect himself against school bullies, but it's not this gun, and he and Evie have a lot more to worry about than school.

Marielle Heller is fabulous as Evie, a nuanced-but-unhinged teenager, and director (and Artistic Director of the Magic) Loretta Greco allows Evie to toggle emotionally back and forth, seeing herself one moment as a contentedly doomed Juliet and the next as a Columbine-style avenger. Although Julia Brothers's Gloria and Darren Bridgett's Clay make your skin crawl with their neurotic and cruel bantering, Brothers in particular slowly emerges as the focus on stage. She is the one who is trying the hardest to understand what's going on, whereas Clay is a conniving weasel and Evie -- well, Evie expects to die.



The ending is fantastic theater, and it makes perfect sense. Prepare to be surprised and stunned. "Evie's Waltz" is a dance with the devil through the psyche of the modern family. You will find yourself wanting to scream at the three actors: "Get inside, for God's sake!" But you know they can't. They have to sit it out, like all of us in the audience, if there's ever going to be a chance of making things right again.