



Theater review: 'Nibroc Trilogy' gives us characters worth knowing in Echo Theatre show

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By **LAWSON TAITTE / The Dallas Morning News**

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Arlene Hutton's *Nibroc Trilogy* is full of people you actually wish you knew in real life. How many contemporary American dramas can claim that?

Echo Theatre is performing all three plays in repertory at the Bath House Cultural Center. *Last Train to Nibroc* opened two weeks ago, *See Rock City* last week. The third installment, *Gulf View Drive*, came on line Thursday evening.

In *Last Train*, a pair of young lovers, May (Morgan Justiss) and Raleigh (Ian Sinclair), get to know each other by fits and starts during the early 1940s. The sequel, *See Rock City* (reviewed at Thursday's matinee), finds the two married and living with May's mother (Nancy Munger) in a small Kentucky town. Raleigh has physical problems that keep him from serving in the army. It galls him that May's job as a school principal supports them. His mother (Susan McMath Platt) criticizes and belittles him, making things worse.

Gulf View Drive moves the story into the mid-1950s. May and Raleigh are living in Florida. He has a good income from writing youth novels, which have propelled them into a comfortable suburban lifestyle. Soon both mothers are in residence, and Raleigh's coarse, countrified sister, Treva (Kristin McCollum), soon joins the household, as well. Although the denouement seems a bit out of period, the script's construction is tight, the comedy often uproarious and the emotions as complex as they are heartfelt.

Hutton has filled her plays with juicy novelistic detail, and Echo's staging, directed by Ellen Locy and Pam Myers-Morgan, brings it all to vivid life. All five performers distinguish themselves. Sinclair unites charm, vulnerability and hidden strength as the generous, spontaneous Raleigh. Justiss' May is a bit more actor-ish, less natural, but she is someone we can love and identify with, too.

Platt, in the one unsympathetic role, allows us to laugh at Mrs. Brummett's foibles without alienating us completely. Munger shades the warm, supportive Mrs. Gill with all sorts of warm and subtle colors, and the bumptious but hurting Treva is a real breakthrough for McCollu. She's so transformed you almost wouldn't recognize her.

Each of the three plays can stand on its own, but do your best to see all of them, perhaps at one of the all-day marathons Echo is presenting on the final two Saturdays of the run.

Through Feb. 28 at the Bath House Cultural Center. \$15, passes to all three shows \$40.
214-904-0500, www.echotheatre.org.