

‘The Outsider’ is the perfect antidote for America’s recent political crisis

Play by Limelight runs through Sept. 18 at the Gilroy Center for the Arts

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By Camille Bounds



Photos by Elizabeth Mandel

Limelight Theater’s “The Outsider” is an explosion of fantastic talent, sidesplitting comic timing and super entertainment. Here is one dazzling show you are guaranteed to really get your money’s worth. The performers put forth amazing talent and energy for a fun 90-minutes of mirth and amusement.

Playwright Paul Slade Smith's show is about a timid politician who overnight accidentally finds himself the state governor after the previous governor resigns following a sex scandal. This razor-sharp satire skewers the fact in government that when it comes to politics, the less the public thinks you know, the higher you'll go.

The play celebrates the promise of democracy while poking fun at the people attracted to politics.

The play opened Limelight Theater's 2022-2023 season Aug. 26 for a four weekend run. The theater is in downtown Gilroy at the Center for the Arts building.

Peter Mandel (as the brand-new "Gov. Ned Newly") provides a solid performance as brilliant and smart in government but has no social skills and suffers a paralyzing fear of public speaking and the news media.

Even though Chief of Staff "Dave Riley" (played by Guillermo Morales) believes Ned will be a political failure, overbearing professional political consultant "Arthur Vance" (Jason Harris) sees things differently and sets about to transform Ned's public image.

Other performers in the cast are Allie Bailey who plays professional pollster "Paige Caldwell," Christy Wright who plays temporary employee "Louise Peakes," and more than holds her own as the off-the-wall temp who revels in the fact she doesn't know what she is doing. Lisa Serra plays the TV reporter "Rachel Parsons," and Michele Leonard-Maher plays TV cameraperson "A.C. Petersen."



The play is directed by JoAnna Evans who keeps the story moving at a riotous pace.

The set construction by Mandel and scenic artist Susan Graeser fit well with this remarkable production that keeps this very convoluted plot moving and interesting. Emily Shem-Tov is Limelight's managing director.

"The Outsider" is the perfect antidote for the heaviness of America's recent political crisis, and it's especially fun with the election season ramping up.

Running before the elections in November, the show's political theme is very timely and topical to be addressing what politics and candidates are in today's world, especially with the media.

Despite the complications of the situation, the show's message is a positive one about the future of democracy.

Its theme suggests that although there is much stupidity in government, we all can remain hopeful because there are a lot of good leaders out there, too.

Spend an enjoyable evening's entertainment with "The Outsiders" and you can't help leaving the theater rejuvenated. This is a solid presentation that has wonderful comic timing and up to date humor spinning.

MORGAN HILL THE TIMES

Limelight opens season with ‘The Outsider’

By: [Erik Chalhoub](#)
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<https://morganhilltimes.com/limelight-opens-season-with-outsider/>



“The Outsider” cast includes Christy Wright (from left), Peter Mandel and Lisa Serra. Limelight’s production opens Aug. 26. Photo: Elizabeth Mandel

Politics these days are an ever-enlarging pit of divisiveness, but Limelight’s season-opening political comedy focuses on something everyone can get behind: laughter.

“The Outsider,” performed by Limelight presented by South Valley Civic Theatre, runs select days from Aug. 26-Sept. 17 at the Gilroy Center for the Arts, 7341 Monterey St.

The play follows reluctant gubernatorial candidate Ned Newley, a terrible public speaker with abysmal poll numbers. But his political consultant sees Newley as the person the public just might be looking for.

Director JoAnna Evans said “The Outsider” is a witty commentary on today’s political climate.

“It’s sharp, it’s funny, it has something valid to say about politics currently,” she said. “The political thought is we need somebody who is a Washington outsider in order to do better. The play explores whether we really need an outsider, or do we need somebody who is people-oriented who knows how to get things done.”

Peter Mandel portrays Newley, and said the character has strong values who believes in the government, but struggles to convey that to the public.

“To me, he is the hero of the story,” he said. “He is incredibly shy and not a natural politician at all. That tension makes performing the character fascinating.”

Mandel, who serves as executive director for Limelight, said the group wanted to schedule a show to make audiences laugh.

“This is pure comedy,” he said. “This is a laugh out loud good time. I think everybody is in the mood for that right now.”

Evans, a veteran of local theater, directing and performing in everything from giant musicals to short plays, said the small, intimate nature of the Limelight show, with only seven performers, takes a different mindset for everyone involved.

That won’t be a problem for the experienced cast who hail from around the Bay Area.

“You have to pull back,” she said. “We’re only inches away from the actors. At the big playhouse in Morgan Hill, gestures have to be bigger, you have to worry about volume. Here, you’ve got to be careful about sight lines, about volumes, not overacting.”

For information and tickets, visit svct.org/2022_outsider.

‘The Outsider’ is a perfect antidote for our times

Play kicks off Limelight Theater’s 2022-’23 season; three other shows planned

By Marty Cheek

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From left, Allie Bailey as “Paige Caldwell” and Guillermo Morales as “Dave Riley.”
Photo by Marty Cheek

When it comes to politics, the less the public thinks you know, the higher you'll go. And the razor-sharp satire "The Outsider" skewers that fact of government while celebrating democracy. The play will open Limelight Theater's 2022-2023 season Aug. 26 for a four weekend run.

Playwright Paul Slade Smith's hilarious and timely show is about a timid politician who overnight finds himself the state governor after the previous governor resigns following a sex scandal.

"Ned Newley" (played by Peter Mandel) is brilliant and smart in government but has no social skills and suffers a paralyzing fear of public speaking.

Even though his Chief of Staff "Dave Riley" (played by Guillermo Morales) believes Ned will be a political failure, political consultant "Arthur Vance" (Jason Harris) sees things differently and sets about to transform Ned's public image.



Other performers in the cast are Allie Bailey who plays professional pollster "Paige Caldwell," Christy Wright who plays temporary employee "Louise Peakes," Lisa Serra who plays the TV reporter "Rachel Parsons," and Michele Leonard-Maher who plays TV cameraperson "A.C. Petersen." The play is directed by JoAnna Evans.

"The Outsider" is the perfect antidote for the heaviness of America's recent political crisis, and it's especially fun with the election season ramping up, said Emily Shem-Tov, Limelight's managing director.

"The timing is perfect," she said. "It opens right before the elections in November and it's very timely and topical to be addressing what politics and candidates are in today's world, especially with the media."

Mandel describes his character as "very competent as a lieutenant governor" but intensely shy with people, making his new job intensely difficult.

"I'm a good person for governance," he said. "And then I get thrust into this situation where the governor loses his job and I'm now the governor and it's not a good fit."

Despite the complications of the situation, the show's message is a positive one about the future of democracy, he said, explaining the theme as: "We all can remain hopeful. There are a lot of good leaders out there."

As a fan of politics, Morales explained he can connect with Dave's plight where he sees Ned Newley as a guy who is really a genuine leader.

"He knows what to do and how to do it. He's just a big, awkward dork," he said. "He doesn't look like he knows how to do it and nobody listens to him. It takes a genuine person to take the time to actually hear him and say, 'No, this guy actually knows what he's doing.'"

Paige Caldwell is the first person Dave hires to help the new governor keep his job, Bailey said. It's a task that seems impossible for the pollster.

“In politics, there’s the artifice,” Bailey said. “There’s what the candidate shows in that public persona that has to be very suave and very likable and you want to vote for that guy, versus the knowledge and the intelligence and knowing how to do the job. That is what Ned Newley is and that’s why Dave is backing him — because he knows how to do the job.”

Limelight’s other shows this season are the musical “The Fantasticks” (opening Oct. 21), the bittersweet comedy “Later Life” (opening Jan. 20) and the comedy “Becky’s New Car” (opening May 26).