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Present Laughter's funny but long

TAG's newest comedy gets laughs, but lacks plot.

by Kate Watson

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Theatre Arts Guild's Helen Goodwin, Terry Coolen and Rayna Smith-Camp.

In Noel Coward's *Present Laughter*, Garry Essendine (Terry Coolen) is a self-centred actor whose every move is a performance. He is surrounded by adoring women, and employees who cater to his whims. Coward is, of course, a master of elegant language and dry wit, and much of the humour comes from the way Essendine overstates everything and the way his wise-cracking assistant Monica Reed (Helen Goodwin) understates things. There are some very funny moments in this production (Sandi Montgomery gets lots of laughs as the chain-smoking, slow-moving Swedish housekeeper), but the soap-opera-like plot is simply not enough to hold one's attention for two and half hours. I'd have to say this is a near-miss that is ultimately sunk by drawn-out timing and a mish-mash of wonky accents.

To Oct 8, Pond Playhouse, 6 Parkhill Road, Wed-Sat 8pm, Sun 2pm, \$13-16, 477-2663

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