

THE GIVER in Pittsburgh

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I'll be leaving Friday to attend several performances of the Prime Stage production of "The Giver" in Pittsburgh. Here's a photo of Jonas and The Giver, from the Pittsburgh Post Gazette, as well as a review of the performance:

'The Giver'

Speak with manners and precision. Don't let doubts impair our vision.

That's part of the mantra repeated by the citizens of the community of sameness, a seemingly idyllic environment portrayed in Prime Stage Theatre's production of "The Giver," based on the Newbery Award-winning novel by Lois Lowry.

The residents, including 12-year-old Jonas, seem content and happy with their lives. Everything is the same. There is no war, no pain, no difficult decisions to make, and disruptions are quickly taken care of.

Then Jonas is selected to become the Receiver of Memory. As he undergoes training with The Giver, who transmits to him the history of what the world was like before "sameness," Jonas sees what his community is missing. There's no color, no choices, no love. He begins to have doubts that the security of his community is worth what the citizens are giving up to maintain it.

Under the direction of Wayne Brinda, Prime Stage's artistic director, the stage production captures the thought-provoking issues of Lowry's tale. The simple set design and the drab-colored uniforms emphasize the oneness of this regimented and isolated society. Video

screens help show the transfer of memories from The Giver to Jonas without disrupting the other scenes.

The responsibility of getting the play's message across falls mainly on the shoulders of Alexander Zukoff as Jonas and Jay Keenan as The Giver. Both rise to the challenge superbly. Zukoff portrays Jonas as a mature child who is open to improving his society, not a precocious brat. Keenan's grandfather-like nature shines through as he bonds with Jonas and starts to see truth through the boy's eyes.

There's not a lot of action here, which may disappoint some of the younger set. But the story offers up relevant issues, serving as an impetus to family discussion.

"The Giver" continues 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 2:30 p.m. Sunday at 937 Liberty Ave., Downtown, and 8 p.m. May 12 and 13 at Charity Randall Theatre, Stephen Foster Memorial, Oakland. Tickets are \$15 for adults, \$13 for seniors and \$8 for youth. Prime Stage will host an author's reception with Lois Lowry from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Saturday. Tickets are \$15. Call 412-394-3353 for reception or show tickets.



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