



- [Art Festivals »](#)
- [Art News »](#)
- [Art Stops »](#)
- [Artists »](#)
 - [Abstract »](#)
 - [Expressionist »](#)
 - [Graphic Artists »](#)
 - [Impressionist »](#)
 - [Performance »](#)
 - [Photography »](#)
 - [Pop »](#)
 - [Portrait & Figurative »](#)
 - [Realist »](#)
 - [Surrealist »](#)
- [For Sale »](#)
- [Public Art »](#)
- [Theater & Film »](#)
- [Uncategorized](#)

subscribe: [Posts](#) | [Comments](#)

search the site

[Now NYC-based, Gabrielle Macafee a singer-songwriter with clarity of purpose](#)

[share](#)



[this](#)

[Danielle Channell is Meg Magrath in Lab's 'Crimes of the Heart'](#)

ARTSWFL's review of Lab's 'Crimes of the Heart'

[0 comments](#)



Lab Theater's *Crimes of the Heart* is a touching Southern Gothic tragi-comedy that revolves around three emotionally-damaged sisters who reunite in a small town in Mississippi. But the play is equally about the two unseen men who have inflicted their scars. As the play opens, they're both in the hospital. One with the vessels in his brain all a-poppin' and the other suffering from a gunshot wound to the gut.



The downtrodden sisters are Lenny, Meg and Babe Magrath.

At thirty, Lenny is the eldest, but acts twice her age. She's the saddest of the lot, a mousy woman who has ceded her present to care for their Granddaddy, the family patriarch who raised her and her sisters after their father abandoned them and their mother hung herself along with the family cat. There are no bounds to her



self-sacrifice. She has eschewed love, happiness and all sense of privacy, as evidenced by the cot she's set up in the kitchen so that she's always within earshot of the cantankerous old coot's every beck and call.

Meg is at the other end of the spectrum. A consummate narcissist, she thinks nothing of taking a bite from each of the chocolates in Lenny's box of Fannie Farmer Assorted Creams in her search for the ones with the pecans and walnuts. It was a bus rather than a private jet that conveyed her



back home to Hazelhurst after her Hollywood singing and acting career collapsed and her ensuing nervous breakdown earned her a brief stay in a psychiatric hospital. Barely home for 24 hours, she tries to woo her old boyfriend back even though he's married now with two children. It can't be homewrecking if his wife is a Yankee and the kids are half-Yankees after all.

And then there's the baby of the trio. The pretty, slim sugar fiend has just been released from jail, where she



was booked and held for the attempted murder of her husband, an attorney by the name of Zach whose sonorous voice is so boring that it puts Babe right to sleep. She was aiming for his heart, but her hand shook so much that she hit him in the stomach instead. (Or maybe it was because lawyers don't have hearts after all!) Although we're not privy to the pictures, it turns out that Babe may have had reason to shoot her husband for more than his voice or his looks. But then again, Babe's interracial extra-marital affair with a fifteen-year-old may undermine her defense.



The play is constructed as a series of interactions between the sisters and Babe's defense attorney, Barnette Lloyd, and what develops is a heartbreaking saga of low self-esteem and self-sabotaging behaviors that derail the Magrath girls from reaching their potential and attaining even a modicum of happiness. Granddaddy has really done a number on these women. He kept Lenny at home and under his thumb by convincing her that her half-functioning



ovary made her undesirable and unsuitable for love and marriage. He fawned over Meg so much, that she now believes the world revolves around her. And he actually arranged for Babe to marry the horrible, abusive Zach.

Victims of his questionable upbringing, all three are severely maladjusted, as their cousin, Chick, is given to shrilly and gleefully point out.



But the stark reality of their sad-sack situations serves as the wellspring of a strong current of wry, homespun observational humor. And playwright Beth Henley uses a constant stream of one-liners and pithy quips to lighten the pathos and keep the audience in stitches. But the real reason that Lab audiences will fall in love with *Crimes of the Heart* is not the jokes or Henley's brilliant characterizations, but the acting job turned in by Lucy Sundby, Danielle Channell and Holly Wilson, who play Lenny, Meg and Babe, respectively.



These three actors are so invested in the script and Paul Graffy's sensitive direction that you'd swear they're actually sisters. They get mad and frustrated with each other. They scream and talk over each other. They touch, hug and hold each other as you would expect of three girls who've forged bonds as survivors of childhoods better off forgotten than remembered. Their love for one



another is palpable; their connection raw and painfully believable. In return, you cannot help becoming invested in them and their problems from first meeting.

Sundby is particularly adept at touching the audiences' heartstrings. Channell is a joy as the cigarette-smoking, bourbon swilling Meg. But it's Holly Wilson who commands the stage and every



scene in which she appears. The ones she shares with Justin Larsche are especially enjoyable.

Larsche plays Babe's lawyer. He's had a crush on her since she sold him an orange pound cake at a charity bazaar. The poor guy is still thunderstruck in spite of Babe's self-destructive, murderous proclivities, and not

even her affair with an underage African-American boy can dampen his affection (and remember, this is Mississippi in 1974)!

Once again, that small bundle of attitude known as Kayleigh O'Connell delivers a memorable



in a quirky role. (She was the housemaid, Elvira, in *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane – A Parody of the Horror* and Marla Smitty Smith in *Play On!*) As cousin Chick, she's so annoying that the audience cheers lustily when she was chased out of the house and off the stage by a broom-wielding Lenny toward the end of the play.

Although his role as Doc Porter is limited, Marshall Prater does a good job portraying the man whose



leg Meg crushed when she insisted he ride out Hurricane Camille with her – and whose idyllic family life she seems hell-bent on crushing next.

While weighty psychological issues and psycho-social themes abound in this play, you will remember “Crimes of the Heart” for the acting and poignant humor. In the end, however, the only true crime would be if you miss this show.

January 5, 2018.



RELATED POSTS.

- [‘Crimes of the Heart’ extends The Lab’s love affair with tragi-comedy](#)
- [Lucy Sundby is Lenny in Lab’s production of ‘Crimes of the Heart’](#)
- [Kayleigh O’Connell is Chick Boyle in Lab’s production of ‘Crimes of the Heart’](#)



- [‘Crimes of the Heart’ play dates, times and ticket info](#)

Comments are closed.



Donate



the sweet art gallery

Plus Contemporary Artwork
Is Pleased To Present
"50 Shades of the Blues!"
Wednesday, April 1st, 5-8 PM
with live acoustical music by "Hunter Lowe"

About the Author



Tom Hall is both an amateur artist and aspiring novelist who writes art quest thrillers. He is in the final stages of completing his debut novel titled "Art Detective," a story that fictionalizes the discovery of the fabled billion-dollar Impressionist collection of Parisian art dealer Josse Bernheim-Jeune, thought by many to have perished during World War II when the collection's hiding place, Castle de Rastignac in southern France, was destroyed by the Wehrmacht in reprisal for attacks made by members of the Resistance operating in the area. A former tax attorney, Tom holds a bachelor's degree as well as both a juris doctorate and masters of laws in taxation from the University of Florida. Tom lives in Estero, Florida with his fiancée, Connie, and their four cats.

[Fort Myers Web Design](#) by [Impulse Creative Studios](#)

REPLACE-WITH-GA-CODE