



The website of Boulder Magazine...

- HOME
- MAGAZINES
- EVENTS
- DINING
- LODGING
- SPORTS
- VIDEO
- SHOPPING



GetBoulder.com Theater Reviews

Reviewer Beki Pineda is a 30-year veteran of the Denver theater scene as a former teacher and director. She has owned and operated All Propped Out, a theatrical prop rental house, and for 14 years reviewed theater for the former publication Time Out for Entertainment. She is a both professional theatergoer with a true love for the art and an unabashed theater groupie.

The WOW Factor for each production measures its worth against a perfect score of 10. Shows rated 7 and above are the ones Beki recommends.

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GIDION'S KNOT: Written by Johanna Adams; directed by Wendy Franz. Produced by square product theatre and Goddess Here Productions at the Diary Center for the Arts, 2590 Walnut St., **through Jan. 18.** Tickets at squareproducttheatre.org.

A parent-teacher conference gets off to a rough start as the mother is not sure of the room and the teacher is sure she doesn't want to be there. The colorful fifth-grade classroom assumes an overlay of dread as the mother, Corryn, arrives to find out how her son, Gidion, is performing in school. In the conversation that ensues, information slowly leaks that reveals Gidion's involvement in an incident at school that prompted another tragic incident at home. A Gordian knot with no easy answers needs to be examined.

Tammy Meneghini as Corryn radiates anger and fear in her posture and in her polite questions issued through clenched teeth. When alone in the classroom, she wistfully looks for signs of her son—his desk, his work on the bulletin board, his art. Both seeking answers and fearing them, she relentlessly pursues her son's life at school with the determination of a pit bull. A teacher herself, she is positive that her son's teacher can provide insights into Gidion's behavior and accept blame for the results. Her grief is so palpable that the sound of children in the halls between classes stops her in her tracks.

Emily Harrison as the teacher, Ms. Clark, reeks of trepidation and insecurity at facing the anger of this woman alone. She is obviously charged as well with the responsibility of protecting the school from further damage. Her attempts to protect Corryn from knowledge of Gidion's actions finally give way to anger, and more facts emerge. Surprises and plot twists are sprinkled throughout the evening like little bombs going off in your heart. The differences between the two women—their expectations, their maturity of viewpoint, their unwillingness to accept blame—are illustrated by their reactions to a theme paper Gidion has written.

Gidion, the unseen third character, emerges as an 11-year-old with great sensitivity and an imagination that melds his real life with the mythic tales his mother teaches. He thinks so far outside the box as to render it nonexistent. He has a streak of brilliance, a need for justice, and a flair for the dramatic that would outshine both women. He creates a solution to his own Gordian knot that far exceeds the usual "cut it or untie it" remedies.

This is a powerfully written piece that offers no easy solutions, and it is given voice by two powerful actresses who are so invested in this story that it is even difficult for them to smile at the curtain call. Not to be missed, and the run is short. Get on down there!

WOW factor: 9
