

## A mother struggles to see past herself

Play explores challenge of autism

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Lucy (Andrea Green) and her mother, Vivian, (Kate Eastwood Norris) meet with a doctor (Ross Beschler) in "Lucy." (Matt Urban)

Ultimately what the audience sees is Lucy's story reflected through her nervous system. This inner world is seen within the outlines of a house in which lighting and sound create Lucy's landscape of meaning.

Don't be surprised if winter weather comes indoors or there is an earthquake that shakes up mother and daughter, leading to new understanding.

"What Lucy is able to finally express to her mother kind of slaps Vivian in the face about how naive and selfish she is," said Green.

The premise of the play is an interesting idea, said Dr. Dan Gottlieb, who devoted a segment of his WHY radio show "Voices in the Family" to the production.

He pointed out that families do not understand the inner world of autism and struggle to imagine what an autistic child is experiencing. Moreover, parents are hard-pressed to find the energy to cope with the stress of raising such a child, said Gottlieb.

"Some (families) fall apart while others thrive, despite struggles and hardship," Gottlieb said.

In the play the struggle is no one's fault. The playwright says his agenda is to bring understanding to the struggle, given that in society there is longing for perfection.

And don't expect answers to why this neural disorder is on the rise or whether autism is caused by mercury poisoning, plastics in the environment or vaccines. Whatever the passion around these issues, they are not the focus of "Lucy."

In shining a light on autism, the play shows that a mother, such as Vivian, must come to terms with who she

is. Vivian must wrestle with whether she is autistic, guilty, sad or simply selfish and misanthropic.

Along the way, the audience will ask that too, said Atkins, who is conscious of creating roles that are rich in colors for both actresses.

Green, who is launching her acting career, is delighted to have such a challenging part. "Playing Lucy is a big step for me," she said.

Director David Stradley said he's pleased with the imagination and energy that the actors have brought to demanding roles.

Green has big expressive eyes and uses them to great effect, in that she is often silent, the director said.

As for Norris, one moment she is crying, the next she is telling someone off or coming up with cockeyed ideas.

"Kate has done a brilliant job, and I would love to take credit for her performance but it's her doing," said Stradley.

Are some women completely unsuited to be mothers?

Maybe, Stradley said, but he wonders how many will leave the Delaware Theatre Co. believing that of Vivian.