

As Seen In...

# The Post and Courier

THE SOUTH'S OLDEST DAILY NEWSPAPER • FOUNDED 1803

SUNDAY, May 27, 2012

POSTANDCOURIER.COM

Charleston, SC

★\$1.00

## SPOLETO The Post and Courier Spotlight

# Laughs abound in 'Normel' play

## REVIEW

BY LAUREN SMART

*Special to The Post and Courier*

There's no such thing as normal in Judy Heath and Thomas Burke Heath's latest play, now onstage at the Footlight Players Theatre. Normal's not even in the name.

The *Perfectly Normel People* in the aptly titled play are the Normellinos, an Italian family in Queens that the protagonist Hadley — a book smart farm boy from Kansas — boards with during his first year at New York University.

The Normellinos confuse yelling with passion, have mandatory Sunday dinners and hang Frank Sinatra just a half-inch below Jesus. And when Hadley happens across their advertisement for off-campus housing, he discovers all manners of love and friendship in this zany house.

This is the sophomore playwriting effort by the Heaths and premiered in Charleston last September (in a staged reading), but the laughs haven't stopped yet in this comedy about family and coming-of-age. Thomas Burke Heath takes the helm of this local cast, both as the director and as Johnny, the 40-year-old Normellino son who still lives at home. Heath's comic presence is matched by Lara Allred, as his younger sister Angela with whom Johnny constantly bickers. And nearly all the cast keeps up.

The writing in this play is funny and moving and the Piccolo Spoleto production brings heart and humor, although certain technical elements were a little sloppy opening night. At times, *Perfectly Normel People* is reminiscent of the vociferous family in "Moonstruck" — the film starring Cher and Nicolas Cage — and at other times explores a slightly bizarre plotline in which Frankie (in a hilarious performance by Tripp Hamilton) is visited by the Virgin Mary.

This uplifting comedy delivers laughs in bulk. Get your ticket to *Perfectly Normel People* before it's too late and check out the rest of Piccolo Spoleto's Theatre Series.

**Lauren Smart** currently writes for Broadway World.