



## The Diviners

*Jim Leonard*

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## **The Diviners** Jim Leonard

Drama / 6m, 5f / Unit set w. platforms Winner of the American College Theatre Festival, this marvelously theatrical play is the story of a disturbed young man and his friendship with a disenchanted preacher in southern Indiana in the early 1930s. When the boy was young he almost drowned. This trauma and the loss of his mother in the same accident has left him deathly afraid of water. The preacher, set on breaking away from a long line of Kentucky family preachers, is determined not to do what he does best. He works as a mechanic for the boy's father. The town doesn't have a preacher and the women try to persuade him to preach while he tries to persuade the child to wash. When the preacher finally gets the boy in the river and is washing him, the townspeople mistake the scene for a baptism. They descend on the event and, in the confusion, the boy drowns. "A splendid drama by a playwright ... with poetic as well as human feeling." - Variety "The Diviners, which would be meritorious from anyone, is astounding from so young a writer.... Renders the humor and horror of the hinterlands with staggering accuracy.... Compelling." - New York Magazine

## **The Diviners Details**

Date : Published April 29th 2010 by Samuel French, Inc. (first published June 1983)

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Author : Jim Leonard

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## From Reader Review The Diviners for online ebook

### **Annie Sheridan says**

The ending was suitable.

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### **Bri says**

I was in this play several years back. You know a play is good when you are crying while delivering the final monologue night after night and the sound of people fighting back tears grows louder as the lights grow dim.

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### **Malissa says**

One of my favorite plays.

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### **Maureen says**

CP2018. This is alarming in its beauty and quiet tragedy. What can I say, I'm a sucker for Leonard's style. The Diviners is no different: its theatricality is beautiful and complex, not at all as straight-forward or simple as it seems. This much is true: it's got layers I'm still peeling back.

I have no idea what I want to do with it, how I want to approach it, and for once I'm thrilled by the way the story will challenge me instead of dreading it. I always claim to be "process over product" and I think I mostly practice what I preach, but I know I get caught up in my own perfectionism sometimes. Maybe this production will mark a turn away from ego and back to storytelling.

I will say, though, I wish like hell that I enjoyed reading plays more—there is just something about their flatness on the page that is so off-putting to me. And really, I mean all plays, even the masterpieces and the ones I end up fan-girling over. Is here a way to appreciate the act of script-reading? It's arguably one of the more important parts of my "side-gig" yet *\*inarguably\** my least favorite. Seriously, somebody help me.

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### **Kaila Tacazon says**

Nothing about this play shocked me... it's well written, with both funny and sad bits, but I don't connect with the main themes or characters. I love how the playwright explicitly states that all the characters are simple, well-meaning people.

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### **Kenny says**

Very moving. Review to follow.

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## Grace Wagner says

I did this show over the summer, and it changed me. Not only is this show extremely powerful, but comedic as well. This production will stay with me forever.

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## Liz Mitan says

In theater class students read numerous plays, but this one stuck about to me because often I found myself disappointed in the endings of plays because some didn't feel complete, but while not a complete ending, the reader feels fulfilled. While Buddy is the character this show is known for, I found him rather irritating but that is solely due to my distaste for young children and their ignorance. However, that did not alienate me and I, along with my peers, wept for Buddy's fate. The character that stuck out to me was C.C Showers. The relationships between Showers and the folks in the town is incredibly warming to view. The ending to both acts are impactful.

Note: It is hard to fully understand the strangeness of Showers and Jenny Mae's 'relationship' when script reading. Once you see it performed (with accurate age portrayals) the potential partnership becomes much more uncomfortable.

"The other night dear, as he lay sleeping  
He dreamed he held you in his arms  
When he awoke, dear, he was mistaken  
So he hung his head and he cried

You are his sunshine, his only sunshine  
You make him happy when skies are gray  
You'll never know dear, how much he loves you  
Please don't take his sunshine away"  
~ Act One Finale

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## Mark says

A funny and deeply moving 2-act play by my friend and Hanover College alumnus Jim Leonard, Jr. This story of a mentally damaged boy and his quest to find a meaning in loss and life was a success when Hanover staged it for the American College Theatre Festival in 1980 (it won the top prize at the Kennedy Center). Then it was a hit in Circle Rep's New York production and is in constant production in colleges, high schools, and community theaters around the world. When will the film be made?

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## Rich says

Interesting. Well-written. Great dialogue. Not for me.

