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**ON GOLDEN POND**

**The Stirling Players Inc  
Stirling Community Theatre**

Until March 19

Review by Stephanie Johnson

"On Golden Pond" is a sweet and memorable trip into the private lives of a family on holidays in a sultry New England summer.

Ernest Thompson wrote both the stage play and the screenplay for the 1981 film version starring Katherine Hepburn, Henry Fonda and Jane Fonda. The story will be familiar to many and comparisons are unavoidable.

Director Tony Rogers has produced a touching and pleasant comedy with this version.

An aging couple spends a long, lazy summer in their holiday home on the shores of a golden lake. Sunsets, swimming, fishing and other well-worn holiday activities amuse family members as they interact.

One of the strengths of the film is its beautiful scenery filmed on the pristine and undeveloped shores of New England's Squam Lake. Set Designer Roger Landstrom has cleverly placed windows at the back of a holiday home lounge room. Changing colours can be seen through these to depict different times of the day. The windows inspire the imagination of nature and golden sunsets.

However, it is the ins and outs of the old and new familial relationships that lie at the crux of Ernest Thompson's tenderhearted play.

The daily interactions of couple Norman and Ethel Thayer are the backbone of this play – the habits, the affectionate name calling, the familiarity that becomes second nature in long marriages are humorously, and sometimes emotionally, portrayed.

Graham Nerlich dominates the stage as the irascible old rogue Norman Thayer Jr. Nerlich's Norman is at once recognizable and irritating, endearing and infuriating, and very, very funny.

Josh Sanders is delightful as the young Billy Ray, whose child-like honesty manages to disarm Norman.

Opening night nerves seemed to get the better of Vee Noble in her role as Ethel Thayer. She dropped lines and fumbled somewhat in the earlier scenes. As the night progressed, she relaxed and warmed to the role.

Edhouse was superbly strident as the daughter, Chelsea, still trying to gain her father's approval at the age of 42. She deftly handles the awakening realisation that she needs to let go of the past and communicate as an adult to both parents.

Dave Greig and Malcolm Walton were also strong in their supporting roles, although perhaps Walton could work a little more on his laugh.



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All in all this play provides a chance to sit back and relax and enjoy a quiet evening's entertainment in the Adelaide hills.