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## On small-time gangsters and tai chi

Camelot Theatre Company presents Jim Geoghan's dramatic comedy 'King of City Island'

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Brian O'Connor, left, and Roy Rains Jr. play brothers Ambrose and Cazzie Angelini, respectively, in Camelot Theatre's production of "King of City Island."

Photo by Julia Moore

By Laurie Heuston

Mail Tribune  
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Playwright Jim Geoghan's dramatic and comic look at psychosocial dysfunction is at the heart of "King of City Island."

The play is set in the Bronx, where we meet small-time crook Cazzie Angelini and his ragtag followers Lloyd and Eugene, along with longtime girlfriend Donna and her best friend Muriel. Angelini is Italian, but not quite Mafia, and has dozens of get-rich-quick schemes that never seem to work out, so much so that at the end of the first act he's arrested and sent to prison.

"The serious side of these characters made the biggest impact on me when I read the script," says John Litton, director of the Camelot Theatre production. "Then their humor became apparent in the rehearsal process."

Angelini acts like a bully because, as a kid, he was bullied by his father. Lloyd and Eugene are naive and easily manipulated. Donna is strong and aims to change her man, so the two bicker constantly, and Muriel lets obesity drive her loud, pugnacious behavior.

"But, at any moment, we have the opportunity to change," says Livia Genise, Camelot's artistic director. "If we can open our minds."

"King of City Island" previews at 8 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, May 2-3, at Camelot Theatre, 101 Talent Ave., Talent. Tickets to the May 2 preview cost \$22, and proceeds benefit Mediation Works. Tickets for the May 3 preview cost \$10. The show opens Friday, May 4, and runs through Sunday, May 27. Curtain is at 8 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays. Tickets cost \$22, \$20 for seniors and students (except for the matinees). A pay-what-you-can performance will be offered at 8 p.m. Wednesday, May 9.

While Angelini does his time, his brother Ambrose — a priest who's fled his church after falling for Las Vegas showgirl Zelda — arrives at his brother's home.

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"Ambrose is the catalyst. He is the vehicle for change," Genise says. "He introduces the characters to acceptance and unconditional love, and they become a support group for each other. Think about how many sitcoms use support groups as vehicles to get laughs."

Geoghan works as a writer and producer in Hollywood. An interaction with his daughter inspired "King of City Island," Genise says.

"He takes a sitcom format and says some important, moving things," Genise says. "Such as 'treat the people you love with respect and cherish them.' In the first act, the audience is introduced to a motley crew of losers. The transformation comes in the second act."

Ambrose also introduces the characters to tai chi as therapeutic expression.

"It's used as a metaphor for fighting, but not really fighting," Genise says. "It's more about learning to go with the flow, rather than fighting things."

"It's much like a sitcom," Litton says. "The way the characters interact and the things that they say to each other are hysterical. I think audiences will relate to all of them. Each has some trait I've recognized in a friend or in myself."

Lloyd and Eugene prob-ably pro-vide the most comic relief in Geoghan's story, Litton says. Things don't go their way even as they try to go legit. After procuring a business license, the two go out and buy a ton of toothbrushes.

"A lot of people brush their teeth," Eugene says.

Camelot's production stars Roy Rains as Cazzie Angelini, Brian O'Connor as Ambrose Angelini, Barbara Rains as Donna, Nicole Vilencia as Muriel, Bob Herried as Lloyd, Brandon Manley as Eugene and Taja Watkins as Zelda.

Parental guidance is recommended for bawdy language.

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