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## REVIEW: *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-In-The-Moon Marigolds* Williamston Theatre

## Collaboration shines at Williamston Theatre

By Donald V. Calamia

In *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-In-The-Moon Marigolds*, a young girl conducts a school science experiment to test the impact of radiation on tender, young seeds. However, that's not the only radioactivity in the youngster's life. And as the opening night audience observed at Williamston Theatre, this latter energy is far more dangerous and hurtful.

A quiet and sensitive Plain Jane, Tillie (Jennifer Shafer) is the younger of two daughters, whose divorced-then-widowed mother Beatrice (Emily Sutton-Smith) takes in elderly borders to help pay the bills. But Beatrice has little compassion; resentful that life has dealt her a bad hand, Beatrice spews venom at anyone and everyone with little or no provocation.

Toxic family dynamics collide when Tillie is honored at school for her experiment. Will the explosion allow Tillie to grow into a beautiful flower as did many of her irradiated seeds? Or will she, like an unlucky few, wither away?

Produced in collaboration with the MSU Department of Theatre, director John Lepard has mixed his cast with experienced professionals and college actors-in-training. The result is a slick and powerfully poignant night of theater.

Shafer totally immerses herself in the heartbreaking, yet hopeful role of Tillie, while Kellyn Uhl successfully explores the many dimensions of older, bustier and far more popular sister Ruth.

Comic relief is provided by Stephanie Koenig as bespectacled science fair contestant Janice, while Gloria Vivalda says nothing, but speaks volumes as the walker-clutching, hard-of-hearing Nanny. (Watch her eyes and hand movements; they tell you everything!)

But it's Sutton-Smith who fully grasps her character and plays her with great zeal. So much so, that - as the woman next to me whispered to her friend at one point during the show - you'll likely feel guilty laughing at how horribly Beatrice treats everyone around her.

Kirk Doner's cluttered and raggedy set perfectly suits the family's mental and financial states, while the costumes by Jodi Ozimek match their distinct personalities. And Donald Robert Fox lights everything quite well.

**SHOW DETAILS:**

*Williamston Theatre, 122 S. Putnam Rd., Williamston. Thursday-Sunday through March 1. Tickets: \$18-\$24. For information: 517-655-7469 or [www.williamstontheatre.org](http://www.williamstontheatre.org).*

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Thursday, February 5, 2009 at 8:00 pm  
 Friday, February 6, 2009 at 8:00 pm  
 Saturday, February 7, 2009 at 8:00 pm  
 Sunday, February 8, 2009 at 2:00 pm  
 Thursday, February 12, 2009 at 8:00 pm  
 Friday, February 13, 2009 at 8:00 pm  
 Saturday, February 14, 2009 at 3:00 pm  
 Saturday, February 14, 2009 at 8:00 pm  
 Sunday, February 15, 2009 at 2:00 pm  
 Thursday, February 19, 2009 at 8:00 pm  
 Friday, February 20, 2009 at 8:00 pm  
 Saturday, February 21, 2009 at 3:00 pm  
 Saturday, February 21, 2009 at 8:00 pm  
 Sunday, February 22, 2009 at 2:00 pm  
 Thursday, February 26, 2009 at 8:00 pm  
 Friday, February 27, 2009 at 8:00 pm  
 Saturday, February 28, 2009 at 3:00 pm  
 Saturday, February 28, 2009 at 8:00 pm  
 Sunday, March 1, 2009 at 2:00 pm

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