

Review: Barn's 'Beer' a perfect comedy brew

by [Conklin's Barn II Dinner Theatre \(Notes\)](#) on Wednesday, January 16, 2013 at 9:35am

Theater review by Patricia S. Stiller for *The Pantagraph*

There was an extra dose of excitement greeting theatergoers as they arrived at the Barn II Dinner Theatre this past weekend. Managing director Mary Simon (wearing every operations hat imaginable) could hardly contain her enthusiasm as she welcomed her guests, escorted them to their tables and shared her personal connection to the author of the evening's production – Sean Grennan, whose comedy, "Beer for Breakfast" was about to make it's Illinois debut. As I listened to Simon connect the theatrical dots, I felt somehow invested in the production I was about to see – as much as I love the chicken – I couldn't wait for the lights to dim. This endearing comedy, featuring Simon and her talented funnymen Pat Gaik, Dan Challacombe and the incomparable Bob Lane Jr., is a baby boomer' delight set in the cozy lakeside cabin of Adrian (and his wife Jessie). Adrian has invited his lifelong pals TJ (Lane), Mark (Gaik) and Richard (Challacombe) for a boys-only weekend of beer, pork rinds, cholesterol and classic rock so they can party like it's 1979!

As the guys settle in to await the arrival of their host, we learn that TJ fears he is losing his edge in the ad game, Mark is a frustrated writer who fills each day being a househusband and Richard is recovering from a debilitating stroke that has him hiding from the outside world. This weekend with the boys is the first venture out since his illness. Several beers into the weekend, the belch brigade is shocked when the cabin's other owner arrives in her husband's place. How dare she crash their party?! Under Simon's direction, the ensemble dances a finely choreographed comedy cha-cha, offering a healthy blend of slapstick and sentiment, veering ever so slightly from the popular door-slammers the Barn is known (and loved) for, but delivering an epic battle of the sexes that had couples pointing at one another throughout the evening. Grennan's well-crafted script is a welcome addition to the Barn's repertoire. And, for the record, it's pretty cool to learn how it landed in the country.



Left to right: Pat Gaik, Bob Lane Jr., Mary Wimon and Dan Challacombe in 'Beer for Breakfast'