

# SAN DIEGO STORY

Reviewing San Diego's Professional Performing Arts



Photo by Lisa Strickland

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Sandiegostory is a vibrant forum on live performance in San Diego County. Sparked by reflections from seasoned critics in theater, music, dance, and performance art, the site invites discussion on the arts and their meaning in our lives.

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### THEATRE REVIEWS

## Moxie Stages a Refreshing 'Orange Julius'

by Bill Eadie 4 Comments September 26, 2015



Basil Keimendahl's *Orange Julius*, making its world premiere in a production at Moxie Theatre, is a rich and thoughtful study of family, love, and the bonds brought about by war. It is, however, far from the Hallmark version of these themes and requires audiences to persevere until meanings become clear.

Julius (Jeffrey Jones) is a Vietnam veteran who was exposed to Agent Orange during combat. In later life, he has developed cancer and that cancer has spread to much of his body. Caring for him has become too much for his wife, France (Dana Case), and his daughter, Nut (Rae K. Henderson), has come to help out.



Rae K. Henderson and Jeffrey Jones  
Photos by Daren Scott

But, Nut has an agenda to be worked on as well: she wants to connect with her father as male. Nut is "queer:" she dresses like a man and frequents gay clubs. She fantasizes about being in her father's war experience as one of his comrades. She's also recovering from substance addiction, and she's got the clarity of vision that comes from the painful process of facing up to one's own participation in a disease. Nut shares this characteristic with Julius, who has become mostly stoic about his impending death.

Mr. Kreimendahl's play skips around in time, moving from the immediate care-giving situation to flashbacks of earlier family life and Nut's fantasies about fighting with her father

## Every Performance Tells a Story

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Rae K Hendersen on [Moxie Stages a Refreshing 'Orange Julius'](#)

**Dancing™** KPBS, January 9, 2014

**"Eh? San Diego pubs Club**

**Saratoga™** Duluth Tribune, July 31, 2012



**Jeffrey Jones and Dana Case**

matters are the little things dropped in conversation, which, when layered one on top of the other, work to provide a depth that is emotionally moving.

“ none of these pieces of information is important in and of itself – it’s the layers that matter

Mr. Kreimendahl has an uncanny ear for what is fresh and true. He was born well after the Vietnam War ended, but his war scenes evoke the comradeship of war without resorting to phony heroics of war films (Steve Froehlich plays Ol’ Boy, Julius’s combat buddy, with the requisite macho gusto).

On the home front, we learn that Nut’s sister, Crimp (Wendy Maples), has grown from a pestering older sister into a responsible adult who is, nevertheless,



**Steve Froehlich, Jeffrey Jones, and Rae K. Henderson**

on the sidelines of Julius’s last days. We also learn that there is an older brother, unnamed and unseen, who doesn’t make it home before his father’s death.

Again, none of these pieces of information is important in and of itself – it’s the layers that matter.

Will Davis, a New York-based director and friend of Mr. Kreimendahl, handles the time-jumping and layering in surprising but effective ways. Working on a sparse set, by Victoria Petrovich, and with spare but evocative lighting by Jason Bieber, he puts Julius and Nut in the center of the action and mostly keeps France and Crimp on the sidelines. Yet, we’re often aware of their presence, even when off-stage, as they are sometimes visibly lurking, waiting for an opportunity to engage again. Mr. Davis also encourages his cast not to underline any of the qualities that might be sensational – through his work, the audience comes to the

in Vietnam. Much of what happens in the play is relatively insignificant by itself (I wanted to say “banal,” but that’s the wrong word for it). What

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Will Davis **Agent Orange**

**San Diego Repertory Theatre** family dynamics

La Jolla **Basil Kreimendahl** **Lamb's Players Theatre**

**Chopin** **San Diego Dance Theater** Carrie Fisher

play instead of the play to the audience.

All of the company members respond with layered performances of their own. At the center, Ms. Henderson has the most challenging role, featuring difficult monologues and a good deal of physicality in the war scenes. Ms. Henderson moves through the play as a person with wisdom and perspective beyond her years.

Coming off of a marvelous performance in Intrepid Theatre's *The Quality of Life*, this past July, Mr. Jones lands another bullseye as a man tormented in some ways accepting in others. Ms. Case, Ms. Maples, and Mr. Froehlich each have an arc to play and do so in an effective manner.

*Orange Julius* is not just a promising play by a young writer. It's an assured, mature, work that challenges and moves well beyond expectations. Thanks to Moxie for recognizing the talent and having the vision to bring it to San Diego audiences.

This review was based on the final preview performance, Friday, September 25. Remaining performances are Thursdays at 7pm, Fridays & Saturdays at 8pm and Sundays at 2pm, through October 18. See the information below for the theatre address and a link for ticketing. Ample free parking is available on the street and in an off-street lot.

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Categories: Uncategorized



### [Bill Eadie](#)

In addition to reviewing theatre for San Diego Story, Bill also reviews for [TalkinBroadway.com](http://TalkinBroadway.com). He is a member of the



[San Diego Theatre Critics Circle](#) and a professor in the [School of Journalism and Media Studies](#) at [San Diego State University](#).  
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## 4 COMMENTS



Rae K Hendersen

REPLY

SEPTEMBER 27, 2015 @ 11:08 AM

Thank you so much for coming to see our show and such a lovely review!

I do have one big correction, though. Our playwright Basil Kreimendahl uses the gender-neutral "they", not "he".

Thank you.

Bill Eadie

REPLY



SEPTEMBER 27, 2015 @ 12:07 PM

Thank you for your comment, and congratulations on a superb performance. I hope that our readers will take note of your correction. I would like to be sensitive to the pronouns that gender-queer and trans individuals wish to be used, but to do so in this context would have forced me to elevate the importance of gender-queer element of the play. I stayed after the performance to listen to how the author and director talked about their work, and I got the sense that, while this element is certainly an important one, especially for the character you play so well, it is only one of several elements that make this story so beautifully layered. I hope that you will understand why I resist going back and making the edits you request.



Rae K Hendersen

REPLY

SEPTEMBER 27, 2015 @ 6:13 PM

Sorry, I think maybe you misunderstood me... I'm talking about the playwright themself, not the character in the show.



Geoffrey Clow

REPLY

OCTOBER 12, 2015 @ 10:47 AM

I went to see this play on your recommendation, and I'm glad for it. Orange Julius is very good work by all involved. The performances are pitch-perfect. The story lines are episodic, non-chronological, and intertwined — true to family life, but difficult to make coherent on stage, and yet made sensible and revealing in Moxie's production. Understated while challenging, it is very satisfying theatre.

Your review is proving to have satisfying depth, as well. On re-reading, I'm finding more in both the play and your review than I appreciated the first times around. You bring out important aspects, big and small, in both the play's themes and the production's techniques. That's perceptive critical writing — nicely layered, like its subject.

Rae K Henderson's comments in this forum are thought-provoking, too. It sometimes seems that language changes quickly, and yet,

perhaps not fast enough where it counts. I take from Henderson's gentle prodding that language does not merely express our thoughts, but — insidiously — the language habits which we inherit constrain our thoughts. The third person pronouns, which have centuries of ingrained usage, no longer serve the purposes of a more sensitive and informed culture.

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