

## **Charlie Day Climbs a Tree and Fights Pirates... And Aliens... And Dragons (A long title for a review of a long show)**

By Leslie Howard

“It’s Always Sunny in Philly...” in a treehouse. Reunite three 30-something childhood friends, revitalize their sense of imagination, mix in nerd references and their martial problems, then finally, get them high. This is the world created by playwrights Brandon Jensen and Mark Warner in “The Tree House Effect.”

The performance from Emporia State University Theatre, directed by Theresa Mitchell, was over two hours long without an intermission and packed full of exemplary physical comedy, man humor, absurd imaginative sequences and at times, incredible heart.

While the show was unarguably too long and occasionally dragged due to the unsuccessful milking of various nerd culture jokes, the show’s concept was fascinating and the performances from the three primary actors Cameron Reynolds (Lucas), Elliott Brest (Jeremy) and Justin Tinker (Tyson) were captivating and more importantly entertaining. Tinker particularly captured audiences with his appropriately over-the-top physicality and unparalleled comedic timing. His characterization was strikingly similar to that of Charlie Day in his role of Charlie Kelly on “It’s Always Sunny in Philly.”

The script itself consistently inspired the question; “What the heck am I watching?” In the best ways and in the most confusing ways. The characters segued from talking about love, marriage, missed opportunities and commitment to fighting an impressive dragon and being captured by female space aliens whose only goal was to execute men (naturally).

From a technical theatre perspective, “The Tree House Effect” left something to be desired. While it may have been the result of a new space and speedy load-in, the performance was latent with inconsistent sound levels and missed marks for lighting, amongst other obvious errors. That being said, the set, designed by Chris Lohkamp, was hilariously dressed and deliberately detailed with movie posters, trash and imaginative remnants of a childhood fortress. The set itself seemed to serve as a fourth primary character.

This show left audiences, confused, entertained, wanting to have light saber battles and never grow up. It also left audiences wondering how Emporia State University got Charlie Day to play Tyson.