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# Beck Center for the Arts' 'Really Really' plunges from dark comedy to needless theater of cruelty (review)

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By [Andrea Simakis, The Plain Dealer](#)

CLEVELAND, Ohio - In the Beck Center for the Arts production of Paul Downs Colaizzo's "Really Really," everyone is horrible, warped by privilege or want - walking ids with either too much money or not enough of it.

They attend a tony college and are majoring in self-promotion. Colaizzo, who started working on the play at 21, makes this plain with the help of Grace (Rachel Lee Kolis), the Louis Vuitton-loving president of Future Leaders of America.

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As she delivers a speech to an invisible, approving crowd at a conference, she is backed by photos of the group's role models: Ronald Reagan, Ted Cruz and Phyllis Schlafly.

Grace and her entitled classmates are members of the "I" generation - as in iPhone, iPad and iTunes - and came of age in an a la carte world, technologically speaking. Everything - the music they listen to, the information they consume, the products they buy - is tailored to their personal wants and needs.

They are a jaded bunch - what else, says Grace, could they be? - steeped in the knowledge that America is no longer the land of opportunity, but opportunism. It's every bitch and bro for themselves.

If this depresses you, that seems to be the point. Colaizzo's nihilism is intended to shock and finger-wag. Look what baby boomers and Gen-Xers have wrought: They've created little monsters who will greedily consume the world, modern-day versions of the insatiable Hubbard clan in Lillian Hellman's "The Little Foxes."

This jaundiced worldview is also scabrously funny, for a while anyway, particularly when embodied by Cooper (the indispensable Chris Richards), the burping, beer-swilling, class-dodging head of a house full of dudes and the master of ceremonies at a weekend kegger gone terribly wrong.

When the play begins, Grace and her bestie Leigh (Molly Israel) come home from Cooper's bash, both so drunk they can barely stand. Grace feels her way to bed, but Leigh heads for the bathroom, where she loudly vomits, then sits on the living room couch.

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"Ow," she finally whispers, her face a mask of confusion and grief.

She claims she was raped by "Davis the good," as he is known, a boy she's had a crush on for years. ("Davis, you're the nicest guy I know - and I mean that in a completely negative way," says Cooper.) Conveniently, Davis can't remember a thing. That doesn't mean everyone believes Leigh, including her boyfriend Jimmy, (Randy Dierkes), who was vacationing with his wealthy parents when she was attacked.

Jimmy returns from the beach house, and Cooper and friends let it slip that his girl was boinking the virtuous Davis (Daniel Scott Telford) while he was away.

Distraught, Jimmy confronts Leigh. "I should have left you on the other side of the tracks," he tells her, in a beautifully taut scene that is indicative of the exquisitely fine-tuned acting and direction - by Donald Carrier - at play in this regional premiere.



Randy Dierkes (Jimmy) and Molly Israel (Leigh) play lovers who've grown up on opposite sides of the tracks in the regional premiere of Paul Downs Colaizzo's "Really Really" at Beck Center for the Arts.

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Leigh, you see, isn't like the other kids. She grew up so poor, she often went without food. The trust-fund babies let her into their gated community, as one does a delightful stray. But once she challenges the order of things, she's in danger of being chased off with a broom.

We get a glimpse of Leigh's earlier life when her bosomy, midriff-baring sister, Hayley, appears to offer her sis a shoulder to cry but also to get a piece of her upwardly mobile sibling's action - and a bag of chips - while she's at it. (Olivia Scicolone, tramp stamp and all, milks the least odious female role in the show.)

Colaizzo doesn't imbue his have-nots with virtue. Nor does he play arbiter, helping us suss out fact from fiction.

Leigh tries to convince Jimmy she's telling the truth by floating what may or may not be a lie. Hayley is sure Leigh has bamboozled Jimmy into thinking she's pregnant with his baby, a ruse she's cooked up to land a gold-plated MRS degree. Davis' assault caused her to miscarry, Leigh tells Jimmy; she even shows him the bloody sheets.

Here again, Colaizzo keeps things gray: That blood could be Leigh's, or it could have come from a bad cut Grace got falling into broken glass on their woozy walk home the night before. It's enough for Jimmy, who brings his family's considerable influence at the school down on Davis's head - and anyone who sides with Davis.

Friendships crumble; awful things are said.

"I hope it hurt," Grace seethes at Leigh.

Like the performances. the technical aspects of the production - a nimble. rotating set



And I appreciate caustic cautionary tales, this one warning us of a future that belongs to an army of soulless Mark Zuckerbergs. (We all know college students and 20-somethings who are decent people, and the Pollyanna in me is hoping they'll save us.)

It's the casual misogyny I can't abide. (To those wanting to avoid a major spoiler, time to stop reading.)



Bros will be bros: Chris Richards (Cooper) and Daniel Scott Telford (Davis) are two members of the iGeneration in "Really Really" at Beck Center for the Arts.

For all his coy obfuscation, Colaizzo leaves plenty of breadcrumbs that Leigh was assaulted: There's that lonely "ow" and an exchange with Hayley that argues Davis' rape wasn't Leigh's first violation.

And yet, in a move that remains as mysterious to me as why the average millennial supposedly spends an hour a week shooting, editing and posting selfies, the day after she is raped, a sober Leigh seduces Davis, then exits the bedroom, euphoric.

He ignores her and jumps on his smartphone. His indifference stings her (um, more than the rape?). She claims she just wanted to prove she was worth nailing after all -



Of course, it's Leigh who is punished when an enraged Davis bends her over the couch and rapes her as she screams for help.

Nouveau nihilism disguised as social critique eventually finds its bottom-feeding soul. *Ick.*

## REVIEW

### Really Really

**What:** A Beck Center for the Arts production of the play by Paul Downs Colaizzo. Directed by Donald Carrier.

**When:** Through Sunday, July 2.

**Where:** The Beck's Studio Theater, 17801 Detroit Ave., Lakewood.

**Tickets:** \$12 - \$31. Go to [beckcenter.org](http://beckcenter.org) or call 216-521-2540.

**Approximate running time:** 2 hours, with one intermission.

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