


BWW Interview: Director Kayla M. Kaufman Hopes WTF's CRUMBLE (LAY ME DOWN JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE) Will Inspire Radical Compassion and Empathy

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by Lauren Van Hemert Jun. 4, 2018

This week, The Women's Theatre Festival opens its third season, Women Are Heroes, with Sheila Callaghan's Crumble (Lay Me Down Justin Timberlake).

"I think it is one of the hardest plays I've ever worked on in terms of how to describe it to an outsider," says Director Kayla M. Kaufman, who is making her Raleigh directorial debut.

"It centers around the relationship between Clara and Janice, a mother and a daughter, who a year ago, lost the father of the family who died in a calamity."



"So fast forward a year and everything is crumbling, nothing is going well," she adds. "Mother is trying to pull it together to be strong enough for Janice. Janice thinks that she is going to solve everything by building a bomb. Barbara, the sister of Clara, is trying to care for her 57 cats but also her stressed out sister. Harrison Ford and Justin Timberlake are flying in through the window. And of course, the apartment, who is obviously a character, is trying to murder everyone."

Crumble (Lay Me Down Justin Timberlake) premiered in 2005 during EdgeFest at the Los Angeles Theatre Center. Kaufman says her first experience with the play came just over a year ago when she was looking for an alternative to traditional Christmas theater fare.

"I was very frustrated with the model of the holiday play, and I wanted to find a different holiday play, and I stumbled upon *Crumble Lay Me Down Justin Timberlake*," she says. "So, I did a staged reading of it just to say, 'hey you could do something different around Christmas time if you wanted to.'"

A couple of months later, someone who was in the audience the night of the staged reading in Portland, Maine, messaged Kaufman about the fact that The Women's Theatre Festival in Raleigh was planning to produce the play and looking for a director. The rest is history.

Kaufman says she is excited to share this story with audiences because it shows women as complex, flawed beings doing their best to be a hero for someone else in the play.

"A lot of our politics would be solved if we could have radical compassion for everyone, and you go to the theater to exercise that," she says. "I hope the audience is able to empathize with everyone on stage and see where their hearts are and see that their hearts are all mostly in the right place, even though they might be going about dealing with things in a very wrong way."

"I think we are bordering on something that will be surprising and challenging to an audience and hopefully a lot of people can enjoy it," she adds. "It's a very magical play in which I am relying very heavily on our audiences to have a good imagination to keep it magical."

Crumble (Lay Me Down Justin Timberlake) runs June 8 - June 24 at Burning Coal Theatre as part of Burning Coal's 2018 Second Stage series. For more information visit:

<https://www.womenstheatrefestival.com/crumble>

Here is the promo video for *Crumble (Lay Me Down Justin Timberlake)*.

Photo & Video Credit: Filmed & Edited by Kelly McDaniel & Ryan McDaniel, Featuring Kimmy Fiorentino, Laquana LQ Henny & The Dolls.
