

Playwright on hand for thriller

Players 'Stay' to open this Friday

Everything appears ordinary in the domestic life on stage when the Wimberley Players open the new psychological thriller, *Stay*, on Sept. 13 at the Wimberley Playhouse. But as the story unfolds, it morphs into finely wrought suspense with an unexpected twist.

The playwright Sheila Cowley will join the Players for the Texas premiere of the show, which runs weekends through Oct. 6. On Saturday Sept. 14, she'll greet guests in the lobby beginning at 6:45 and give a talk-back after the performance. Cowley is an award-winning audio producer at WMNF 88.5 FM Tampa, and author of numerous radio dramas.

The actor Deanna Lalich appears as Leanne Abrams, a sensitive, steadfast surgeon who finds a deep purpose battling the blindness of others. Mark Abrams (played by Aaron Johnson) is a globe-trotting journalist who brings the news of the world each week to his radio audience. Once they were so perfect for each other. But Mark has news of a more personal nature these days. He is about to become a father and not with his wife Leanne, but with co-worker, Sandra Kinsky (played by Leigh Shelton).

Exhausted from travel and the rigors of international conflict, Mark winds his way to the home he shared with Leanne. There, with the woman who knows his every preference, he remembers the good times they shared. In reality, this visit is Mark's



RON MACHEN PHOTO

The cast of *Stay* takes a break during rehearsal. Left right, front: Deanna Lalich and Aaron Johnson. Back: Will Mercer and Leigh Shelton.

farewell tour of his life with Leanne. For Leanne it is something else indeed. Blind to inevitable change, she copes in the only way she knows how. It doesn't take long for her colleague Ben (played by Will Mercer) to see the whole picture.

David McCullars, *Stay* director, commented that he likes the pared-down script because he can concentrate on choices the actors make to create real characters.

"We all know when an actor delivers a playwright's line that rings with truth; when that awareness surfac-

es, we connect," he said. "When you hear the dialogue of *Stay* you realize that this is how people actually talk; they finish each others sentences, they interrupt, they joke in code, and they communicate in a verbal shorthand that comes from being familiar with each other."

The cast of *Stay* cast includes four versatile veterans of Players' productions, including Lalich, recently seen on the WP stage in *Once Upon a Mattress*, *Stop the World, I Want to Get Off* and *Rumors*. Leigh Shelton, seen in *Sordid Lives* and *The*

Taming of the Shrew, Will Mercer, on stage in *Death of a Salesman* and *Sordid Lives* and music director of *The Canterville Ghost*, and Aaron Johnson, who directed *Death of a Salesman*. He holds a masters degree in directing from Texas State University and serves as sound designer for the show. Lighting design by Bill Peeler and set design by Scott Wade give the show remarkable production values.

Tickets are available online at www.wimberleyplayers.org or by calling the Box Office at 512-847-0575.

Domestic thriller brings playwright to Wimberley Playhouse

The Tampa playwright Sheila Cowley will join the Players for the Texas premiere of her new play, *Stay*, presented by the Wimberley Players on weekends Sept. 13 through Oct. 6. She will give a talk-back after the performance on Sat., Sept. 14.

When the curtain opens on *Stay*, all seems ordinary in the domestic life on stage. But as the story unfolds, it morphs into finely wrought suspense with an unexpected twist.

The actor Deanna Lalich appears as Leanne Abrams, a sensitive, steadfast surgeon who finds a deep purpose battling the blindness of others. Mark Abrams (played by Aaron Johnson) is a

globetrotting radio journalist. But Mark is pondering news of a more personal nature these days. He is about to become a father and not with his wife Leanne, but with co-worker, Sandra Kinsky (played by Leigh Shelton).

Exhausted from travel, Mark winds his way to the home he shared with Leanne, the woman who knows his every preference. This visit is Mark's farewell tour of his life with Leanne. For her it is something else indeed. Blind to inevitable change, she copes in the only way she knows how. It doesn't take long for her colleague Ben (played by Will Mercer) to see the whole picture.

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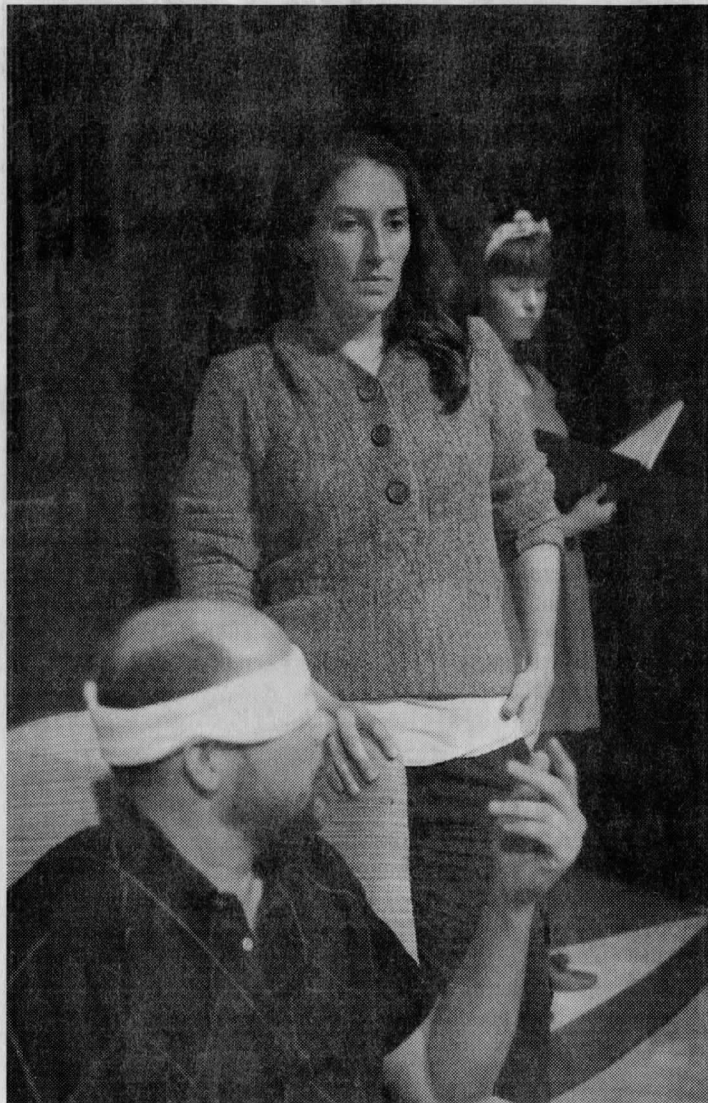
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productions, including Lalich, recently seen on the WP stage in *Once Upon a Mattress*, *Stop the World, I Want to Get Off* and *Rumors*, Leigh Shelton, seen in *Sordid Lives* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, Will Mercer, on stage in *Death of a Salesman* and *Sordid Lives* and music director of *The Canterville Ghost*, and Aaron Johnson, who directed *Death of a Salesman*. He holds a masters degree in directing from Texas State University and serves as sound designer for the show.

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Rehearsing a tense moment in the domestic thriller, *Stay*, are left to right: Aaron Johnson, Deanna Lalich and Leigh Shelton. Photo, Ron Machen. Courtesy photo

My Town

THEATER REVIEW

Acting shines in new show by Wimberley Players



Photos by **Bill Peeler**

Aaron Johnson plays Mark Abrams in the Wimberley Players' rendition of *Stay*, Leigh Shelton as Sandra Kinsky and Will Mercer as Ben Cohen talk in Leeane's office at the end of the play.

By **KAITLIN SCHMIDT**

Features Editor

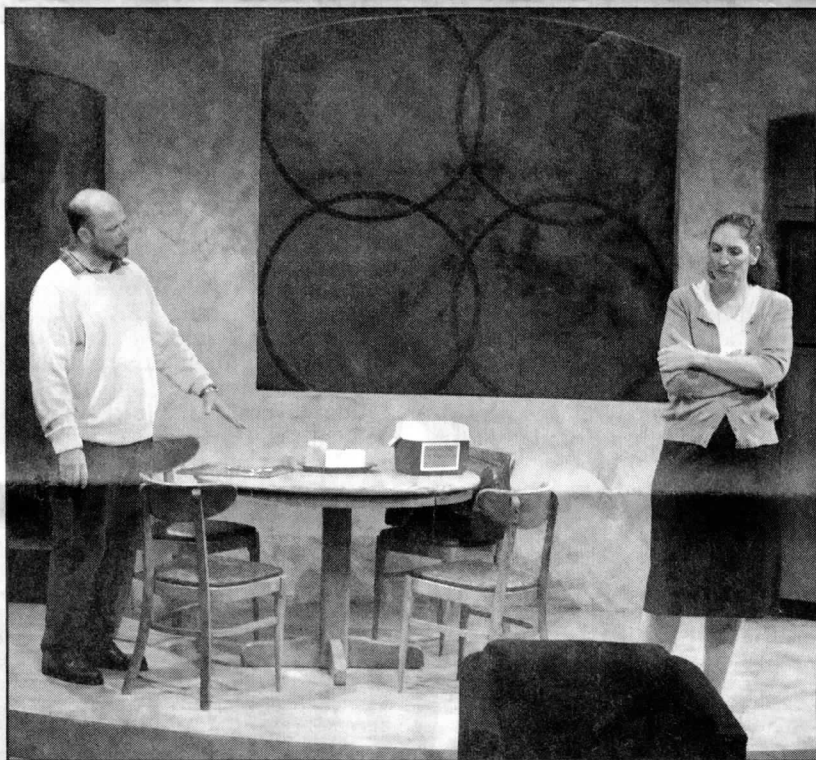
The Wimberley Players is the first Texas theater to produce the original show written by Sheila Cowley, *Stay*. The show takes place in the home and office of Leeanne Abrams who is dealing with the aftermath of her husband's (Mark) infidelity and subsequent impregnating of his mistress and boss, Sandra Kinsky.

Stay is a psychological thriller that boasts very realistic dialogue. Directed by David McCullers, who was last seen on the Wimberley Players stage in *Death of Salesman*, *Stay* follows Leeane, played by Deanna Lalich, as she tricks her husband into staying with her for as long as she can keep him.

After talking with her co-worker and friend, Ben Cohen (played by Will Mercer), Leeanne, an eye doctor, starts to play around with the idea that a serious injury can help keep a marriage together. She drugs her husband (played by Aaron Johnson), fakes a car accident and wraps his eyes in gauze and tells him when he wakes up that shards of glass penetrated both of his eyes and that he needs to rest for a few days. She tells him everything will be okay just as he has spent the first few minutes of the show reassuring her while handing her divorce papers and packing up his things.

A few days later, Leeanne regretfully informs Mark that she indeed had to operate while suspiciously telling Cohen that she managed to fix one of her patients who needed an eye donor.

The events culminate when Mark's mistress (played by Leigh Shelton) returns from a trip to find her blind fiancé staying at his soon-to-be-ex wife's house.



Johnson and Deanna Lalich as Leeanne Abrams discuss the divorce papers on the kitchen table.

She demands that they leave and after Mark returns to collect the signed divorce papers, Leeanne performs one final act of love.

Lighting and sound for the show work beautifully. Bill Peeler is the lighting designer and Johnson is the sound designer. The set, designed by Scott Wade, also works really well for the show. Rain is a theme throughout the play and the rain hitting against Leeane's window really puts the audience inside her house.

But the acting is what really shines throughout the show. Johnson and Lalich perform flashbacks on stage, going from two people in the middle of a

divorce to two people happily married and in love right in front of the audience's eyes. The dialogue is so realistic and the delivery, body language and facial expressions force the audience to feel what the characters are feeling.

For fans of heartstring-pulling shows, this is a must see.

Stay will be showing for two more weekends through Oct. 6. Friday and Saturday shows start at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday shows start at 2:30 p.m.

For tickets, visit www.wimberleyplayers.org or call (512) 847-0575. Tickets are \$18 for adults at \$9 for students.

D Life & Arts

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Catch the documentary "Living Springs" about Barton Springs.

CONTRIBUTED BY LORENZO DEPAOLIS

'Living Springs' screening at Barton Springs

8 p.m. Thursday. Free. Beverly S. Sheffield Education Center, 2201 Barton Springs Road. rally.org/livingsprings.

"Living Springs," a documentary about Barton Springs, is hosting a screening of several short videos from an upcoming project, as well as a '90s-era dance and guerrilla theater performance and a video interpreting Tony Hoagland's poem, "Barton Springs." Once the screening is over, take a dip into Barton Springs and join in the distinctly Austin tradition of howling at the full moon.

3



"Stay" is a dark domestic thriller from the Wimberley Players.

CONTRIBUTED BY JULIE RAY

'Stay' at the Wimberley Playhouse

7:30 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays, 2:30 p.m. Sundays through Oct. 6. \$9-\$18. 450 Old Kyle Road. 512-847-0575, www.wimberleyplayers.org.

The Wimberley Players take on a play with a dark side: "Stay," about a cheating husband and a desperate wife. The four-person cast tells the story of the Abrams, a couple with two successful careers — one is a surgeon, the other a globetrotting journalist — and a once-successful marriage. But Mark Abrams has a secret that Leanne Abrams doesn't handle well when she finds out.

4



Banger's Sausage House and Beer Garden celebrates Oktoberfest.

EMMA JANZEN / AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Oktoberfest at Banger's

11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday. 79 & 81 Rainey St. 512-386-1656, www.bangersaustin.com.

Saturday kicks off the second year in a row of Banger's Sausage House and Beer Garden Oktoberfest celebrations. There will be beer specials, contests, games and more through Oct. 6. The schedule for the first day of the celebration includes live music, a Sam Adams Stein Hoist, horses from Horse Boy Foundation and dog portrait services by Coat and Tails. — Melissa Martinez



"STAY"

A difficult conversation between two women in love with one man takes place in the domestic thriller, "Stay," by Sheila Cowley, in performance now at the Wimberley Players weekends through Oct. 6. Left, Leigh Shelton as Sandra Kinsky quizzes Deanna Lalich, portraying the forgiving wife, Leanne Abrams, who passionately wants her husband to stay. Tickets at www.wimberleyplayers.org or call 512-847-0575.

Weekend watch

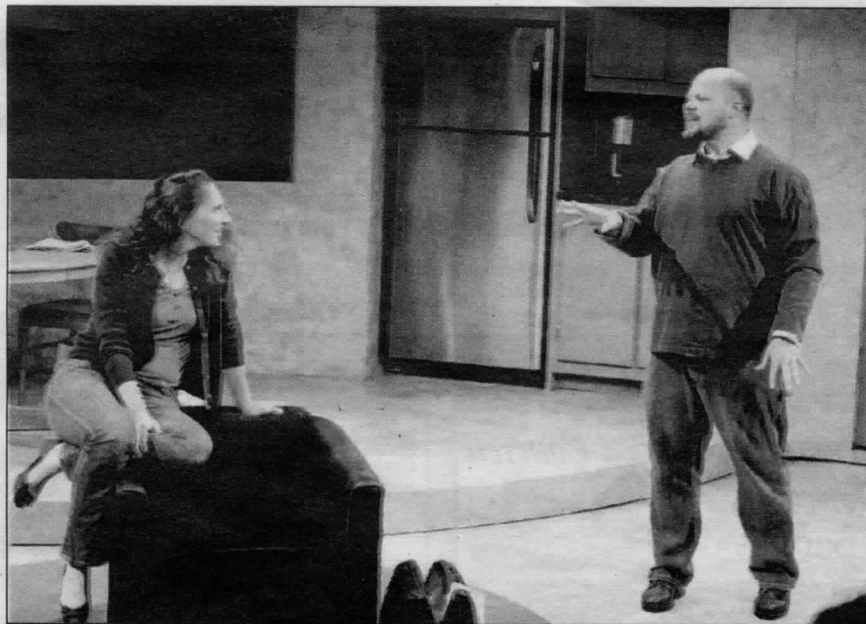
■ Sunday's latest installment of Umami Mia's live music series, KUTX Live, features MilkDrive. Yet to come are other Austin bands including the Rocketboys; Danny Malone closes out the series on Nov. 3. On the pizzeria's porch, which offers 250 seats as well as standing room, listeners can order pizzas, salads, desserts and cocktails to enjoy during shows. 1 to 5 p.m. Sundays. Free. 1500 Barton Springs Road. www.umamimiapizzeria.com.

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Wimberley View

12 — WIMBERLEY VIEW, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2013

'Stay' at Wimberley Playhouse



BILL PEELER PHOTO

Leanne Abrams (Deanna Lalich) and Mark Abrams (Aaron Johnson) share a light moment that makes their faltering marriage feel like a return to normal. The Wimberley Players production of the new domestic thriller, "Stay," by Sheila Cowley continues weekends through Oct. 6 at the Wimberley Playhouse. Tickets at www.wimberleyplayers.com or by calling the Box Office 512-847-0575.

Playwright, thriller coming to Wimberley Playhouse

From Staff Reports

Tampa playwright Sheila Cowley is headed to Wimberley for the Texas premiere of her new play, *Stay*, to be presented by the Wimberley Players Sept. 13 through Oct. 6. Beginning at 6:45 p.m. on Saturday Sept. 14, she'll greet patrons in the lobby before the show which begins at 7:30 p.m. After the performance she will give a question and answer session.

When the curtain opens on *Stay*, all seems ordinary in the domestic life on stage. But as the story unfolds, it morphs into finely-wrought suspense with an unexpected twist.

Actor Deanna Lalich appears as Leanne Abrams, a sensitive, steadfast surgeon whose life work is battling the blindness of others. Mark Abrams (Aaron Johnson) is a globetrotting radio journalist. But Mark is pondering news of a more personal nature these days. He is about to become a father and not with his wife Leanne, but with co-worker, Sandra Kinsky (Leigh Shelton).

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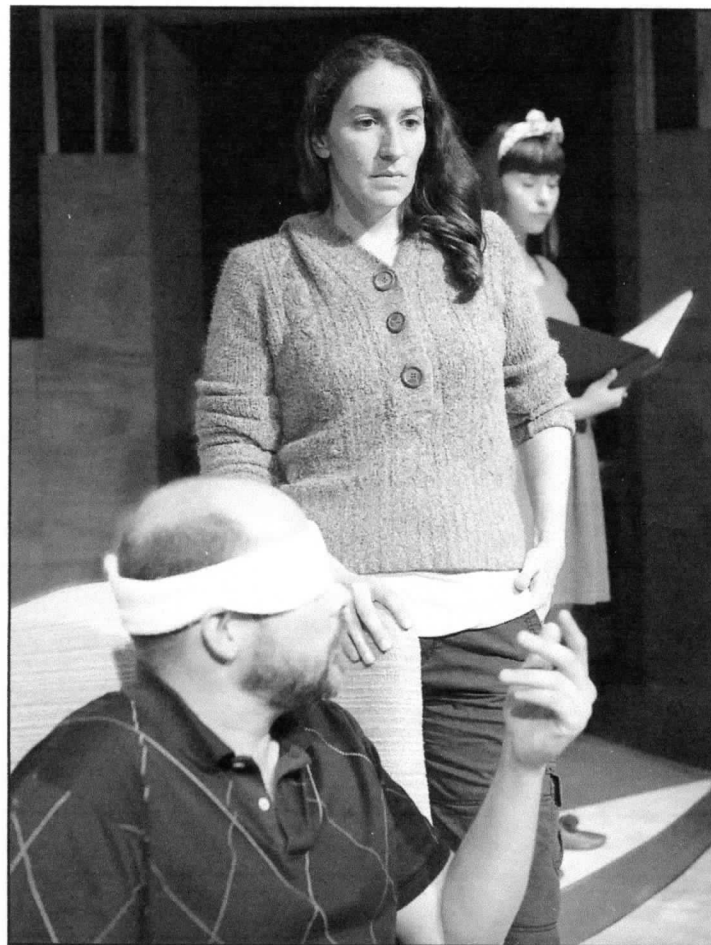


Photo by Ron Machen

Rehearsing a tense moment in the domestic thriller, *Stay*, from left: Aaron Johnson, Deanna Lalich and Leigh Shelton.

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