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‘Guys on Ice’ reels in the laughter

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Two men sit and wait. They await the arrival of an important figure, a person who may or may not arrive. They are occasionally interrupted by someone they briefly mistake for the one for whom they wait. They ruminate on their lives. They are waiting for... the host of a cable television fishing show.

This, after all, is not a mysterious allegory by Samuel Beckett, but rather Riverside Theatre’s reprise of Fred Alley and James Kaplan’s “Guys on Ice: An Ice Fishing Musical Comedy,” which Riverside first staged a year ago. The quirky tale of Marvin and Lloyd, sitting in their shanty awaiting a change in their lives, entertained the opening night crowd from beginning to end.

In fact, “Guys on Ice” is one of those shows that seems to induce audience members to repeat the laugh lines aloud. To do that accurately in this case — because the play is set in Sturgeon Bay, Wis. — it is important to replace all the “t” sounds with “d” sounds. To wit: Dat dere is a funny show.

Under the direction of Jody Hovland, Ron Clark and Lloyd Watkins star as Marvin and Lloyd — ice fishermen, Packers fans, buddies. Throughout the show, they deliver bad jokes, lie about fishing triumphs, console each other with tasty fish from their coolers, and sing.

The show is filled with witty (if occasionally repetitive) numbers, and Clark and Watkins throw themselves into the songs with gusto. They are winningly supported by Erika Christiansen’s simple but funny choreography and Ruth Baldwin’s flexible piano playing.

Watkins, whose handsome, clear voice caresses the show’s amusing and poignant ballads, is perhaps the better singer, but Clark certainly holds his own. The two nail the very funny “Ode to a Snowmobile Suit” early in the show and, at that point, the hook is officially set. The audience couldn’t be more pleased to spend time in the shanty — a space well designed by Tony Zabka.

Kristy Hartsgrove, listed in the program as “Kris,” plays Ernie (aka The Moocher), a fellow fisherman with a proclivity for acquiring the beer and food of others. At first glance, Hartsgrove may seem like an odd casting choice, but equipped with an excellent mustache and equally strong physical and verbal comedy skills, she’s an audience favorite.

It must be said that “Guys on Ice” is something of a one joke show. But it’s a funny joke handled with a light touch that isn’t merely about making fun of folks from Wisconsin. The audience clearly loved this fish story.

“Guys on Ice” continues through Feb. 22.