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## Theater review: Theatre Three revival of 'Talley's Folly' glows with romance

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War-time romance: You think of soldiers having one last fling before heading off to battle. But in *Talley's Folly*, it means a middle-aged accountant wooing a small-town old maid.

Theatre Three's revival of Lanford Wilson's Pulitzer Prize-winning classic opened on Monday. Somehow, director Jeffrey Schmidt's take on the play makes its homespun humor and political point-scoring seem as romantic as a latter-day *Romeo and Juliet*.

On the surface, this aging pair of [World War II](#) lovers seems almost as unlikely to have a happy ending as Shakespeare's star-crossed teenagers. Chuck Huber plays Matt Friedman, a Jewish man with a thick accent and indeterminate origins. Before the play starts, he has picked a quarrel with the family of his ladylove. They don't like anything about him, least of all his leftist ideas.

The beloved, Sally Talley (Shauna McLean), has her own radical notions that put her at odds with her wealthy family in backwoods Missouri. She and Matt had hit it off beautifully the previous summer, but since then she has discouraged him. Her precarious position in the community is in danger of blowing up completely if Matt makes too big a spectacle of himself as he perseveres in seeking her attention.

McLean and Huber aren't like any other actors you might have seen in this frequently produced piece. To begin with, they're probably way more physically attractive, and their onstage chemistry could propel a jet.

Huber has always had paradoxical gifts for both self-conscious comedy and soul-bearing emotion. *Talley's Folly* gives him lots of room for both. The character's sardonic wit can turn Matt into an unsympathetic figure, but Huber has the audience bamboozled with charm. His tenderness and empathy when he finally understands what's going on inside Sally are deeply moving.

McLean emphasizes Sally's vehement resistance to Matt's wooing. She starts out seeming almost plain, quite a feat in itself, and subtly warms and softens as the play progresses.

Schmidt designed the fantastical riverside setting and the atmosphere-inducing sounds. Amanda West's lighting seems a little warm and high-key for moonlight, but it does bathe this romantic piece in a golden glow.

**PLAN YOUR LIFE** Through Dec. 20 at Theatre Three in the Quadrangle, 2800 Routh St. 100 mins. \$25 to \$30. 214-871-3300, [www.theatre3dallas.com](http://www.theatre3dallas.com).