

Theatre Review: The Twelve Dates of Christmas

By: [Lisa Much](#)

On the First Date of Christmas...

Tis the season at CATCO, with the Ohio premiere of Ginna Hoben's *The Twelve Dates of Christmas*.

The perfect pre-Christmas treat for a ladies night out waits just around the corner with this one-woman show.

We first encounter Mary around Thanksgiving. She enters amidst the blare of "Rockin' around the Christmas Tree," garbed in holiday cheer, and bearing more than an armful of gifts. She exclaims her extreme love of the turkey tradition while detailing the story of why her fiancé failed to travel from their city of New York to her hometown, Columbus, to meet her family—he ate bad chicken. Not disappointed by this, Mary takes comfort in the ring on her finger, only to fall into hysteria over seeing him French his blonde-twit of a coworker during the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade on TV. Fighting the holiday hubbub of familial pressure to find a man, Mary, a now single thirty-something, embarks on a year of aloneness enduring the routine of life and the journey of adulthood dating.

Ginna Hoben performs her one-woman script with grace, ease, and passion. The poetics employed at times within the script are beautiful, and the imagery draws the viewer in. Her detailed portrayal of various characters she encounters simply come to life, from her mouse-like mother, to crazy Aunt Cathy, to the strong, superhero Dr. Hogan, to name just a few.

Funny one-liners are sprinkled throughout the show, which sometimes plays out predictably, like *Sex in the City* or a Theresa Rebeck play. However, just when we expect Mary to act a certain way, she asks the

audience for retrospective advice, a sensible bonus that contributes to the girl-talk over the kitchen table vibe of the play.

That said, few spaces seem better than the cabaret-styled studio in which this show is staged, and Hoben brings the audience right in, confiding the awkward, adorable, and embarrassing stories to her friends, the audience. Hoben's performance as writer and actress really takes the audience on an adventure into fictional reality.

Director Jimmy Bohr's encompassing staging helps take the audience on the journey into Mary's world, which features several Christmas trees in a hybrid family home in Ohio-New York actress apartment-mindset. While Mary engages with the audience, the stage management team interacts with her in some nice moments at time, particularly the New Year's Eve scene. New Years being one of Mary's first dates post-breakup, we witness her hanging tacky ornaments on a two foot tall tree to symbolize the death of a date, the possibility of a happy ending, and the "small, inexpensive shattered scraps of [her] life."

Nice sound and music, designed by Lowri Mererid Sion, are interspersed throughout the show, mostly working in Mary's mind to trigger memories and thoughts. The relationship between Hoben and the sound cues was so strong, that it seems that lighting may have missed some opportunities to enhance certain moments, the ultra-lows and super highs, as well as the ornament hanging.

All in all, the light-hearted *The Twelve Dates of Christmas* can bring smiles in this cold season, especially around the table with your girlfriends and a glass of wine.

The Twelve Dates of Christmas plays through Dec. 23 at Studio Three in the Vern Riffe Center, 77 S. High Street. General Admission is \$35.00. More information can be found online at www.catco.org.