By Susan Mulford

THROUGH SEPTEMBER 29: Last Night at Bowl-Mor Lanes

This is NOT a mega Broadway glitz and splash production. What IT IS is a wonderfully charming view of hometown Americana. Like consuming a plate of gooey Mac & Cheese, followed by a slice of warm, homemade apple pie, topped with dairy fresh vanilla ice cream, this show is comfort food for the soul! From laughter to poignant drama, this production is perfectly directed by Elliott Norton Award-winner, Bryn Boice and features two popular and well-seasoned ladies of the Boston Stage. Seven-time IRNE Award-winner, Eliot Norton Award recipient for Sustained Excellence and the 2003 Distinguished Alumni Award from Boston University, Paula Plum plays Maude, opposite Elliott Norton Award-Winner, Nancy E. Carroll as Ruth.

As this dynamite, acting duo take up their roles as friends with a 49 year history, they appear on stage, sans make-up and then don the unflattering costumes of bowling shirts, along with the frank and funny dialogue reminiscent of a past generation, and accent it all with a shared bottle of J & B scotch, bags of Cheetos, Funyuns and Skittles. Greater Boston Stage, located at 395 Main St. in Stoneham, presents this World Premiere comedy that has been cleverly written by Weylin Symes. The impetus for the production came when Symes was sitting around one day and thought “how cool would it be to watch someone bowl on stage?” The playwright also stated, "Growing up, my parents had five couples who they would get together with many times a year to hang out, go to the beach, BBQ, ski, cut Christmas trees, whatever. This group, always led by the women, were known as “The Group.” They were loud, often inappropriate, regularly drank and smoked too much around us kids, and were prone to burst into loud and out-of-tune songs that we’d never heard of. They were also fiercely protective and affectionate...and provided some of the best memories I have of my childhood. That group is mostly gone now but bringing Maude and Ruth to life in Bowl-Mor Lanes is my little way of keeping their spirit alive and remembering how much they valued friendship and family.”

As the story progresses, the plot diverges into various surprising directions and even across several generations. The audience easily realizes that Symes has brilliantly tapped into ".... some of those best memories..." that somewhere or at some time, audience members may collectively relate to a time when everyone in the neighborhood knew our names and our children's names and truly cared. The starring ladies are joined by multiple IRNE nominee, Cez Zwei as Charlene, Ruth's widowed daughter; Arthur Gomez as Ed, owner of the Bowl-Mor; and Winchester High School sophomore, Isabella Tedesco as Teddy, Ruth's granddaughter. The fabulous set design, by award-winning Stage, TV & Film Scenic Designer, James Fenton, thrusts the audience into the aging bowling alley, a neighborhood tradition which has served the local
community as a gathering place for recreation as well as provided a source for long term associations and some friendly competition. Add the incredible Sound Design by IRNE Award-winner, David Wilson, that manages to marry every roll of the bowling ball to the resulting reported pin drops. From gutter balls to strikes, he audibly hits every one. The award-winning Lighting Designer, Jeff Adelberg, provides the finite lighting nuances, including the disco ball, to wrap the production in.

The story opens with Ruth and Maude, our old gals, breaking into the Bowl-Mor bowling alley. We are led to believe that their motive is to initially break a tied score surrounding 49 years of “friendly competition”! But as the tale progresses and the ladies become increasing tipsy from the J&B, multiple agenda's rise and surprising secrets are revealed...that have little to do with bowling and more to do with love. But, in the end.... It all might still come down to one final string before the Bowl-Mor is No-More! No 'Spoiler Alert' here!

This is a fun and funny and totally “unforgettable evening of drunkenness, debauchery…and very bad bowling.” The show runs 90 minutes with no intermission…so you can load up on your bowling alley fare at concessions with things like Cheetos and Funyuns to chow on while you watch this bowling take-down! For tickets to this creatively unique production that surrounds home, friends and heart, visit www.greaterbostonstage.org.