

# BISCAYNE *Times*

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## 'Now and Then' a Decision Will Change Your Life

A funny, thought-provoking play with plenty to talk about

BY EMILY CARDENAS

Laura Turnbull, Mallory Newbrough, Kristian Bikic and Stephen Trovillion (L-R) in "Now and Then" at Actors' Playhouse.

(Alberto Romeu)

**T**he title reveals little, but that's part of its mystique. "Now and Then" is a play by Sean Grennan that's making its Florida premier at the Miracle Theater in Coral Gables, running through Sept. 11.

Some have described it as a romantic comedy, but they would



be wrong. Actors' Playhouse artistic director David Arisco has taken to describing it as a "whimsical, dramatic comedy with romance and mystery."

It all started with the word "enouement" which, according to Urban Dictionary, means the bittersweetness of arriving at the future, seeing how things turned out, but not being able to tell your past self.

Grennan saw this word in a book, looked it up, and started writing.

The four-person play first staged in 2018 is set in a 1980's Chicago bar. Jamie, a musician, is getting the bar where he works ready for closing. With only a few minutes remaining, a stranger in his sixties walks in and strikes up a conversation. They are joined by Jamie's girlfriend, Abby, a late-shift waitress who wanted to be a teacher but dropped out of college to take care of her ailing father.

The exchange takes an unusual turn when Jamie asks the stranger to leave. Anxious to continue their conversation, the older stranger, who is familiar with the bar but has been away for about 30 years, offers each of them \$1,000 to close the bar and chat for another hour.

If it were you, would you take it? Of course, you would. With little hesitation, Jamie and Abby agree and begin sharing stories. The mystery of this late-night guest causes discomfort as the small talk turns personal and the young couple, in their thirties, gets suspicious about the older man's unusual interest in hearing about their current life choices.



Kristian Bikic and Stephen Trovillion in "Now and Then" at Actors' Playhouse.



Kristian Bikic, Stephen Trovillion and Mallory Newbrough in the Actors' Playhouse production of "Now and Then" through Sunday, Sept. 11 at the Miracle Theatre in Coral

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ponders the decisions he's facing about his musical career and his future with Abby. Then the mystery grows with the surprise appearance at the end of the first act of yet another stranger, a very cross older woman who becomes a key figure in the second act.

Alas, time is and is not what it seems. An important plot element turns out to be time travel, with the help of a special watch that allows characters to briefly visit a chosen time in the past.

This is a play of soul-searching and self-discovery, but before we get too deep, it's also very funny.

"It will make you laugh and perhaps cry but more importantly, when you leave, you'll have a lot to talk about," said Arisco.

"It's universal, very relatable, because every one of us has had at least one or many forks in the road," he continued. "Do I go right or left? The reason why it's relatable to younger and older is because we all face decisions that can change our life forever or perhaps for multiple years at a time."

This show marks the fifth Grennan piece that Actors' Playhouse has produced over the years. Past titles include the

musicals "Married Alive!" and "Another Night Before Christmas" and the plays "Making God Laugh" and "The Tin Woman."

What Arisco loves best about Grennan is his writing.

"He's not afraid to put a powerful line



(Alberto Romero)

Laura Turnbull and Stephen Trovillion squabble in "Now and Then" at Actors' Playhouse in Coral Gables' Miracle Theatre.

**IF YOU GO**

**"Now and Then"**  
 Through Sept. 11  
 Wednesday-Saturday: 8 p.m.  
 Sunday: 3 p.m.  
 \$40-\$90

Actors' Playhouse at  
 The Miracle Theater  
 280 Miracle Mile, Coral Gables  
 305.444.9293 or  
 ActorsPlayhouse.org

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“He doesn’t write over people’s heads. He tells a great story the way we all speak, but with real issues.”

In “Now and then,” you’ll get to explore the possibility of second chances and maybe even how to avoid regret.

So, where is the romance in all of this? I guess you’ll have to see the show to find out.

It’s unusual to find a play of this caliber on stage in Miami at the tail end of summer, before the cultural season launches in the fall. The pandemic put it on the Actors’ Playhouse back burner for two years, so don’t miss this opportunity to catch what is another Sean Grennan gem.



### Scenes from "Now and Then"

Mallory Newbrough and Kristian Bikic face a life-changing decision in "Now and Then."



by [Emily Cardenas](#)

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