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INDIAN RIVER COUNTY

'Underneath the Lintel' a winner on Waxlax Stage

By Angela Smith

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REVIEW



The thing about one-person shows: You generally have to like the actor and the role they're playing to enjoy the production entirely.

In the case of Glen Berger's "Underneath the Lintel" — a humorous and intriguing one-man play, now showing at Riverside Theatre's Waxlax Stage — that's not a problem at all.

Veteran actor Jim Van Valen — who previously appeared in the Riverside productions of "Sylvia," "Rounding Third," "She Loves Me" and "Three

Viewings" — is a natural fit as the charming storyteller in the solo piece that explores the meaning of life and the measure of one's worth.

Both tricky and compelling, the context didn't matter because the story and Van Valen instantly were likable in the 90-minute Waxlax Stage season premiere Tuesday night

'UNDERNEATH THE LINTEL'

When: 2 and 8 p.m. performances, Tuesday through Sunday, Jan. 28 through Feb. 8

Where: Waxlax Stage, Riverside Theatre, 3250 Riverside Park Drive, Vero Beach

Tickets: \$45

Information: 772-231-6990; www.riversidetheatre.com

inside the intimate black-box theater.

The tale follows Van Valen's obsessed character: an unnamed Dutch librarian, known to folks simply as "The Librarian," who is on a quest to unearth the identity of the person who returned a book, "Baedeker's Travel Guide," 123 years overdue.

With a performance ranging from funny to intense, Van Valen connects with theatergoers before the play even begins, easily taking command of the mostly bare stage until the last spellbinding moment when the lights fade to black.

The show follows "The Librarian" as he finds

answers to questions he can't seem to shake off: Why would someone return the book now? Who checked it out all those years ago? What about the fine that's built up?

Without giving away too much of the story, the meek librarian ventures far outside his comfort zone — geographically and spiritually — on an unexpected pilgrimage to answer the questions he believes might lead him to the mystery patron, recorded simply as A., who checked out the book in 1873, with a post office box address in China.

Remarkably, the man forgets about the job he

once loved as each new puzzle piece gets him hungrier for more answers.

But what do all those clues add up to? Eager as the librarian is to learn the truth, audiences are too — except they're never truly answered, instead the journey raises questions about our lives and desires.

With plenty of laughs and unexpected surprises, the performance by Van Valen keeps audiences focused and engaged throughout the unusual odyssey — ultimately creating a rewarding experience at the theater as it was meant to be.