



Jake's Women

Written by: Neil Simon

Directed by: Orna Joseph

Performed: Wednesday 27th - Saturday 30th October 2010 at 7.30pm at [St Anne's Hall](#).

	Cast		Crew	
	Jake	<i>Ian Pring</i>	Producer	<i>Sharron Stubbs</i>
	Maggie	<i>Julia Coleman</i>	Lighting	<i>Catherine Fox-Kirk</i>
	Julie	<i>Katherine Young</i>	Sound Design	<i>Jon Simmonds</i>
	Molly (older)	<i>Becca Duke</i>	Stage Manager	<i>Becca Stafford</i>
	Molly (younger)	<i>Matilda Childs</i>	Prompt	<i>Joanna Dodd</i>
	Karen	<i>Amanda Clark</i>		
	Edith	<i>Emma Stallard</i>		
	Sheila	<i>Rosa Hatherley</i>		

NODA Review by Tony Sweeney

General

This group continues to provide excellent drama well performed and very polished in every respect. This time we were treated to a Neil Simon play which is rarely performed and is a little more intense and darker than his more popular work. The play flits between fantasy and reality to good, sometimes comic, effect and you get the impression of a writer perhaps on the brink of a breakdown caused by a number of converging factors embodied in the women in Jakes life.

I did wonder if it was autobiographical since there seemed to be similarities to Simon himself.

Players

Ian Pring (Jake) as the main character was on stage throughout. He has a real stage presence and given the variety of roles he has performed has a real feel for character parts. It must have been a real challenge switching from fantasy to reality with such regularity and still make the whole thing credible.

Julie Coleman (Maggie) played Jakes wife again switching from reality to his imagination. Her acting style is both intense and plausible displaying a range of emotions such as you would expect from a couple in crisis. The interplay's with Jake varied considerably and she managed these aspects extremely well.

Amanda Clarke (Karen) played Jakes sister who only appears in his imagination. The part called for a rather restrained character and this was done extremely well.

Matilda Childs (Molly aged 12) took on the role with real confidence and skill. It must have been a difficult character but she coped with it admirably.

Becca Duke (Molly aged 21) again has real confidence and stage presence. She has a good and relaxed acting style which was well used in this part.

Emma Stallard (Edith) played a New York psychiatrist as a strong and determined character with a good accent and facial expressions. She gave the part real presence.

Kathryn Young (Julie) played Jakes dead ex wife and so had to be a rather idealised figure which worked well. The part where, in his imagination, she

talks to her now adult daughter was excellent, both surreal and charming.

Rosa Hatherley (Sheila) played a character whom Jake dates clearly on the rebound. The main aspect was to inject sanity while he wrestled with his feelings for his estranged wife who appeared in his imagination during her visit. This led to an excellent comic moment between all three players.

Director

Orna Joseph did an excellent job in directing this play using the space available well and through good character development and interplay made the piece absorbing throughout.

Stage Management

Given that entrances and exits were through three doors, two of which were external the logistics of this were extremely well worked out adding to that a variety of costume changes meant the stage management was excellent and seamless throughout.

Sound

A good sound system was used throughout. Before the play began we were treated to New York based music from the 80's adding subtly to the mood.

Lighting

Given that the play was performed in the round the lighting needed to cope with a multitude of stage positions and a clever use of the roof struts enabled this to be done to good effect.

Set design

A simple set design with curtains to mask entrances and exits and the depiction of two rooms. A cut-out window might have been enhanced by a view as it did not seem to feature in the action.

Props

All the props were real objects giving them authenticity. A laptop was used and from my seat it was visibly not on. Also a phone was used where the ring came from behind the curtain again a possible problem of performing in the round. However it did not detract from the shows impact which was thoroughly absorbing.

Costumes

A variety of costumes were used, all of which were appropriate to the characters and all worked well. A nice touch was using an iconic jacket and jeans look to support a daughter speaking with her dead mother in fantasy. As this was in the script it was essential to the portrayal. The final segment where all Jake's imaginary women converge on him which was a cathartic moment was especially well costumed.

Programme

This was a basic flyer which got much of the information across. The director used the pre-show announcements to add to this giving the length of the first act, as well as to ask the audience to switch off mobile phones which is something now essential.

Front of House

The reception is always good with this group who have developed a real following from the local community which I feel is important. This was evident from a full house which is always heartening but I feel the level of support comes from a real commitment to the dramatic art that the audience appreciates.

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