

Articles of Stage Magazine

LOST IN YONKERS Perfectly Performed at Plays and Players

2011-06-06 20:06:36 Stephen Blumenthal

You have to see the wonderful pair of shoes that Arty (Gavin Becker) wears in several scenes during LOST IN YONKERS on the diminutive third floor stage at Plays & Players. Is that the best I can say about this Pulitzer Prize winning play by Neil Simon? Absolutely not! It indicated to me, though, that the theater was paying attention to details.



Gavin Becker (Arty), Jordan Mottram (Jay), the stars of LOST IN YONKERS at Plays and Players Theatre through June 19.

This coming of age play that focuses on Arty and his brother Jay (Jordan Mottram) who find themselves left in the care of their mean, cold, mean, stern, mean, demanding, mean, Grandma Kurnitz (Helen McCrane) and sweet, child-like, sweet, not too bright, sweet excitable Aunt Bella (Angela Carolfi) by their father Eddie (Jim Ludovici) who needs to work as a traveling salesman to pay off debts following his wives' sickness and eventual death, calls for great acting and direction. Plays & Players give you both. Director Betty Chomentowski keeps the pace flowing and cleverly uses the voice of Eddie, reading his letters to the boys, while the number of scenes changes take place.

I found the acting skills of the two youngsters to be completely satisfying. Their ability to stay in character and react to the action in all their scenes even when not speaking was eye opening considering their limited experience. I saw Mercedes Ruehl play Aunt Bella and Angela Carolfi picked up the wonders of this character beautifully. The character of Louie (Ryan Ruggles), Eddie's brother and a small time hoodlum who comes home for a few weeks to escape some gangsters brings the right touch of humor to the play. Bella's sister Gert, inflicted with a breathing problem that affects her speech, does well in this minor role. After many heated, highly emotional scenes, the true love and family values surface to bring the Kurnitz family to a tight unit that may not overflow with affection, but is packed with a new understanding.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the wonderful work the production crew did. Andrew Cowles with minimum equipment gets a perfect feel with the lights, while costumes by Kate Edelson, Leo Zumpetta's sound direction and the set design of Christopher Haig are well planned and thought out.

Loved those shoes.

LOST IN YONKERS

by Neil Simon

Directed by Betty Chomentowski

June 2-19, 2011

Plays and Players Theatre

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