

Theater Review: “The Tale of the Allergist’s Wife” performed by Your Theatre, Inc.

Poking Playful Fun at Woman’s Search for Mid-Life Meaning

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Drivel it was not. And neither was it stuffy or stiff, fluidly injected as it was—from both ends, so to speak—with cortisone and suppositories by a group of five regional actors and actresses that had the small opening-night audience of “The Tale of the Allergist’s Wife” laughing out loud.

Written in the middle-to-late 1990s by Charles Busch and performed by Your Theatre, Inc. under the direction of Stephen Kay between November 8 and 18 at St. Martin’s Church Hall in New Bedford’s South End, “The Tale of the Allergist’s Wife” pokes playful fun at man’s—and in this case, one woman’s—search for meaning, the human condition and phenomena relevant to our time.

As the lights went down over the audience and up over the stage, set as the inside of a Manhattan condo, Indian classical music streamed into the airwaves, reverberating with a small statue of Buddha sitting on a side-table and throughout the old church-hall’s timber vaulted ceiling.

We meet Mohammed (Robin Richard), the helpful Iraqi doorman; Marjorie Taub (Lorraine Lucciola), a middle-aged well-to-do American Jew in the clutches of a mid-life crisis and on the brink of a nervous collapse; Dr. Ira Taub (Robert Duquette), Marjorie’s husband, seemingly fulfilled in his role as successful allergist who services the under-privileged; Frieda (Trudi Miller), Marjorie’s constipated, belligerent and foul-mouthed mother; and Lee (Carol Oliva), Marjorie’s flamboyant and mysterious childhood friend who shows up after many years and excites, titillates and confounds.

Lee, the perfect antidote for what ails the bored Marjorie, has a dubiously impressive résumé a mile long that includes accompanying the Nixons to China and hobnobbing with Jack Kerouac. With Lee’s encouragement, Marjorie comes out of her depressed state, only to be shockingly confronted with her own—and others’—bestiality that, amidst hoots from the audience, drives her back to the safety of the familiar status quo and her “right mind.” Ironically, she declares Lee, who is also an activist for the Universal Human Rights Coalition, a terrorist and pronounces Mohammed a trust-worthy member of the family.

It took about a scene for the cast of Your Theatre, Inc. to warm up, but once they did, they coursed along easily. Duquette’s haste to change clothes after the first scene in Act One resulted in his forgetting to zip his fly, which only added to the humor when, in Act Two, after he had changed his clothes again and had no doubt discovered his oversight, Lee spilled an hors d’oeuvre over his now carefully zipped pants. The comic seduction of Ira and Marjorie, who subsequently joined the party, continued in a well-performed whirlwind to peals of laughter that ended, rather too abruptly, with Marjorie and Mohammed in the final scene bowing to one another in the traditional Hindu *namasté* greeting of farewell.

“The Tale of the Allergist’s Wife” is one of several performances for the 2006–2007 60th Diamond Jubilee season of Your Theatre, Inc. Don’t miss “Later Life” by A. R. Gurney, set for

January 17–27, 2007; “Wit” by Margaret Edson, scheduled for March 14–24, 2007; and “Over the River and through the Woods” by Joe Dipietro, planned for May 9–19, 2007. Tickets are a steal, ranging from \$12 to \$15.00 each with senior, discount and subscription rates available, providing entrance to an evening full of provocative wit, fun and laughter.

For show times and more information about Your Theatre, Inc., telephone the artistic director, Edward Maguire, at 508-993-0772.