

Entertainment

'Any Wednesday' revives ironic humor of upper-class '60s

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By Alexa Kelly

Theater Reviewer

If you can keep a juicy secret. If you can sip champagne with Fortune 500 power brokers. If you can bask in the flourish of mistresses and mystique, than you fit right into the bizarre universe of 1960s upper-class living. Glazed by light strokes of situational irony, Montgomery Theater's production of "Any Wednesday" satirizes the backwards moral norms of a postwar, greed-driven society.

Written by Muriel Resnik, "Any Wednesday" debuted on Broadway in 1964 to become an unexpected overnight success. Original cast members of the four-person comedy included Gene Hackman and Rosemary Murphy. The well-received production was later adapted for the silver screen in a film starring Jane Fonda and Jason Robards.

Youthful former schoolteacher Ellen Gordon (Jessica Bedford) finds her affair with business executive John Cleves (Joe Guzmán) relegated to "pieces of Wednesdays." As John's kept mistress, Ellen resides in a meticulously decorated Manhattan apartment, known to Cleves' tax forms as his company's "executive suite." Trouble arises when both burgeoning businessman Cass Henderson (Ian Lithgow) and John's wife, Dorothy (Gerri Weagraff), arrive on the scene to what they believe to be company property.

Mistaken identity and ironic wordplay abound in this lighthearted farce. Director Tom Quinn's eye for slapstick is evident in a number of highly physical, entertaining exchanges, especially Weagraff's gruff attempts to comfort a distraught Bedford and Lithgow's later treatment of Bedford as a virtual rag doll.

As the childish, homemaker-wannabe, Bedford radically transitions her emotional state almost without warning or warrant. Her hysterical overreactions resonate as uncomfortably overdone rather than funny. Like the rest of the show, Bedford softens in the second act. As the central conflict winds down, the performances lag, lacking much of their initial punch and color.

Guzmán proves underdeveloped and placid where Bedford is explosive. In his most winning scene, he becomes the impudent, over-controlling leader of a number of party games.

More successful are Lithgow (unmistakably the son of prominent actor John Lithgow) and Weagraff. Good-humored and charming, Lithgow glides through each outrageous scenario with ease. Equally inviting is Weagraff, whose high-energy performance as John's accommodating yet oblivious spouse is cleverly sweet.

The theater's intimate space allows audiences to be fully swept up in the wacky antics and heartaches of the four players. Also effective in this regard are the detailed scenic design and various props. From a multicolored fringe lamp to a doorway stuffed with balloons, no detail is spared. Though few and far between, laboriously slow scene changes dampen the pace of the production.

All full-immersion experience, Montgomery Theater's production of "Any Wednesday" embraces the textures and tenors of the

1960s, for an effective exercise in ironic humor.

“Any Wednesday”

continues

at Montgomery Theater,

124 N. Main St.,

Souderton, PA 18964,

through June 30

Tickets: \$23-\$32

Info: 215-723-9984 or

www.montgomerytheater.org

URL: <http://www.montgomerynews.com/articles/2012/06/12/entertainment/doc4fd7805f0149a882939989.prt>

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