

Elizabeth Rex Gets the Royal Treatment at Nicu's Spoon

Broadway Bullet Magazine

Elizabeth Rex

Nicu's Spoon

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A CROSS DRESSER, THE Queen, the Bard, and a merry band of actors... No, this is not the opening to a very bad Elizabethan joke. What it is is the set up for a very well done play by Timothy Findley at Nicu's Spoon Theatre.

The setting is an old barn, the time is the eve of the execution of Sir Robert, Earl of Essex. Queen Elizabeth I has chosen to spend the hours before the death of her beloved "Robin" in the company of her favorite playwright. What ensues is one man teaching royalty how to be feminine and royalty teaching one man how to be masculine.

The script, penned beautifully by Timothy Findley, is deft and witty. We go from one liner to one liner in and out of metaphor and metaphysics. And in the end what Mr Findley has given us is a play that is so well tailored it fits the company of actors performing it like a fine Italian suit.

With such a finely tuned script it seems that just anyone could pull it off, I mean really where are the holes for them to slip through? Not true, it is the skill with which the play was written that makes it all the harder to play. And, much like that fateful

night, all the players are in place. While the ensemble is not as strong as they could be, with the exception of great performances by Merle Louise (Anne, Countess of Henslowe) and Alvaro Sena (Harry Pearl), but they are lead with grace by their three lead players.

Stephanie Barton-Farcas' Performance is bone chilling. Her Elizabeth is dark, powerful, and in the end emotional. We go on the journey with her from grand queen to common emotional denominator hesitantly at first, then with glad acceptance. Despite her small stature (her fellows almost tower over her) she commands the stage with presence and a riveting Elizabeth I. Ms Farcas' presence is felt from the first reveal until her final adieu.

While Elizabeth stands firm, her witty verbose counterpoint, a battler of words as she is (ala Mr Findley) is the show's real stellar powerhouse. Michael DiGioia (Ned Lowenscroft) walks a fine line between two dimensional frivolity and real life, and he walks that line with a gift of verisimilitude. What Mr DiGioia does with his performance is make us feel for himself as well as being the impetus for us caring about Elizabeth. The trauma of losing a love and dying is handled with grace and comedy in the hands of Mr DiGioia, and as heart wrenching as his performance it is one of amazing power.

In his portrayal of William Shakespeare David Scott Nogi gives us a new look at the man that shaped the face of theatre. It is the emotional side of the bard. He is the common ground between the two opposing forces of Elizabeth and Lowenscroft, and he is near perfect in his impish bard, that runs the gamut of irate to forlorn to

joyous as he is being taken into the arms of death at the shows conclusion.

A final word on Mr Findley's script. It mirrors the problems and issues facing modern America, and fits perfectly into the season of Nicu's Spoon geared toward women and gender identity. It's as if Mr Findley has held up a looking glass to modern society to say, "this is who you are, as you were." It is truly one of the most refreshing pieces of this season, and I wonder what has taken the New York theatre world so long to bring this play back to audiences.

Elizabeth Rex is a superb play, performed by a fabulous troupe of actors, even more intimate in the space of Nicu's Spoon Theatre. It is a timely piece that is about the journey we all take to find who we are by accepting who we were. Bravo to Nicu's Spoon for bringing this piece to life in the time they have.