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GAIL GOLDEN REVIEWS

Theatre Review: ‘Stupid F*cking Bird’ at American Repertory Theatre of Western New York

BY BUFFALO THEATRE GUIDE ON OCTOBER 21, 2017

The cast of “Stupid F*cking Bird” at American Repertory Theatre of Western New York.

Last night, I went to ART of WNY to see the Buffalo premiere of Aaron Posner’s “Stupid F*cking Bird”, a comic modern spin off of Chekhov’s “The Seagull.”

...a solid production of a quirky play.

Posner is an award-winning playwright whose many works include a modern adaptation of “Uncle Vanya” called “Life Sucks.” As you may have surmised, you need to be comfortable with profanity in order to kick back and enjoy Posner’s plays!

This is an intelligent play, and it’s full of surprising twists and turns. The fourth wall is frequently broken, and there is even some honest to goodness audience participation. In fact, if the audience doesn’t participate, the play won’t begin!

The objective of “Stupid F*cking Bird” is to do “an old form better,” and the characters, their moods, and their relationships are based on “The Seagull” and take it to another level. The dialogue keeps spinning back to life, love, and art with an occasional nod to politics and social issues.

This is a solid production of a quirky play. It’s well directed with imaginative touches by Michael Lodick, and there is a uniformly strong cast.

Thomas LaChiusa is perfect as the charismatic playwright and does masterful work in the role. Rick Lattimer is pleasant as the lovelorn Dev, and Scot A. Kaitanowski is affecting as the down in the depths doctor. Diane DiBernardo is both amusing and biting as the aging actress.

In the central role of the woebegone would-be writer, Connor Graham tackles both the comedy and drama with aplomb and his audience interaction is impressive and fun.

Candice Kogut is fine as the hopeless Mash who is in love with the young writer, but Ms. Kogut so strikingly attractive that one wonders why the writer doesn’t give Mash a tumble. The casting in this production is unusual. Typically, Masha in “The Seagull” is played by a dark-haired young character actress, and Nina is a gorgeous, willowy blonde like Ms. Kogut.

For the first two acts, Emily Yancey is a peppy Nina, playing the role more like a quintessential ingénue in the vein of Luisa in “The Fantasticks” than the airy, fragile Nina who men want to bring down to earth. Ms. Yancey is right on target in Act 3, where she strikes the appropriate ethereal tone because Nina is the seagull — a beautiful, defenseless, soaring white bird.

The set by Matthew LaChiusa and Thomas LaChiusa is good, especially for the outdoor scenes, and there’s effective lighting by John Shotwell.

The play is entertaining and well produced, and it gives you a lot to think about it.

Running Time: 2 hours, including at 15-minute intermission.

Advisory: Adult language and content.

“Stupid F*cking Bird” runs until November 11, 2017 and is presented by American Repertory Theatre of Western New York. For more information, click here. (<http://artofwny.org/>)