

Evensong should not be missed

Evensong: Like a fine aged wine

Review by Oscar E Moore – From The Rear Mezzanine

Mary Gage, author of Evensong, received an artistic grant, came to the US from Australia – Michigan to be exact - and wondered what she was going to write about. Then she met some old folks in a nursing home who were willing to tell their life stories. "Not interested in hearing each other's stories but telling me their own stories" - she told us after the show in a talk back with the audience. The result is a sometimes wonderful, lyrical patchwork quilt of six people's lives who have reached their eighties plus without ever giving up on the joy of living despite the obstacles thrown in their way – along the way.

The star of the evening, however, is the director Lewis Magruder, who has taken a script which is episodic and not altogether dramatic, and turned it into a special theatrical event – that for \$18.00 should not be missed by any serious theatergoer. He's had some terrific help along the way: Expert lighting by Thom Weaver. Appropriate costumes by Emily Pepper. And an original score by Larry Spivack (played live by pianist Marina Gabunia Verriest) with a little help from his friends Chopin and Irving Berlin - which sets and enhances the quickly changing moods of Evensong.

Now to the actors: Mary Ellen Ashley, Arthur French, Donald Grody, Mikel Sarah Lambert, Pat Nesbit and Lucille Patton. A fabulous ensemble that rarely have a chance to speak to each other. What a pleasure to see professionals at work on a simple set in a simple black box theatre and to sit back and hear them and see them bring these characters to beautiful life. One by one they enter through a door amazed to see that we are here to listen to them. And listen we do. To their lives. About their moms and dads and sibling rivalry and weddings and husbands who drink too much and segregation and hopes and wishes that are ignored by God, and failure and sickness and having children and ultimately the joy of living no matter what. And that's what it's all about. Enjoying life. Being thankful for life. Going on despite some troubles here and there. It's a simple story. A basic story and at times I wished that their lives were more exciting. But to these people their lives were exciting and we have been allowed to hear about them.

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Now playing at TBG Arts Center at 312 West 36th Street New York, New York

oscar e moore for talkentertainment.com