

Oldcastle Theatre Company, Bennington, VT  
**SHEEPDOG**, by Kevin Artigue. Directed by Kirk Jackson. Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

*“I’m through with you.”*

When is a relationship less than it can be is a question not often addressed in public and private life simultaneously. When two police officers fall in love, publicly, then move in together, privately, the answer to this and to many other questions about human beings start to flow. Kevin Artigue’s play, “Sheepdog,” now playing at Oldcastle Theatre Company’s Bennington Performing Arts Center, answers as much as is possible in eighty-five minutes as Amina, played by Ravin Patterson, negotiates her way through a narrative about her affair with Ryan, played by Michael Patrick Trimm while important moments are acted by them, and often twice, as they expose the other factors besides love and race that make a relationship possible.



Michael Patrick Trimm, Ravin Patterson; Photo: Kaiya Kirk.



Michael Patrick Trimm; Photo: Kaiya Kirk.

Director Kirk Jackson, more than ably assisted by lighting designer Michael Giannitti, peels away the layers of honesty, trust, and emotion that inform the closeness of these two characters. Amina is examining her decisions and her understanding of how her lover has engaged in his work and where responsibility lies when a

terrible mistake is made in the execution of his job. She examines his errors and his truths from every angle, a probable detective in the making, as she looks with clouded, then clear, eyes at all probabilities and possibilities. She reaches conclusions only to re-examine them from a different point of view. It is fascinating to watch this unfold, partially through Jackson's imposed silences, and then to realize where the outcome waits.

Ravin Patterson plays this all with a straight-forward honesty that is both compelling and off-putting. She forces us to sympathize with her quest for the truth and also to empathize with her projected losses. Patterson plays her role with a simplicity that restores our own sense of trust in police procedure, a sense many of us have abandoned over the past several years. The brilliance of her work is in that simplicity; Amina's resolve is hard to ignore and awful to contemplate.



Ravin Patterson; Photo: Kaiya Kirk.

Michael Patrick Trimm, on the other hand, shows us a man caught in a trap that he has laid for himself, a trap he cannot escape so he works his way deeper into it with every statement he makes. As the woman he loves pursues truth, he counters with honesty born out of imagination. It is when that truth and honesty encounter each other that Ryan begins to crumble in her eyes and the personal drama and the public drama fall into major conflict. Trimm's confrontation with his character's convictions is very well-played and he engages our sympathies with every declaration.

On a simple set designed by Ken Mooney the plays moves along swiftly with as much emphasis on the human commitments as on the responsibilities the two characters assume. We are left with the odd concept that two strong people engaged in the same work should probably not become involved romantically even when it seems inevitable. The struggle to avoid the pain is just too much to bear, even for an analytical mind. This is a very good play delivered in the best way possible.

+ 08/27/2022 +

**Sheepdog** plays at the Bennington Performing Arts Center, 111 Main Street, Bennington, VT through September 6. For information and tickets call 802-447-0564 or go online to [www.oldcatletheatre.org](http://www.oldcatletheatre.org).

