

Bridge Street Theatre, Catskill, NY

Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes, by Hannah Moscovitch.

Directed by Margo Whitcomb. Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

“Maybe his delivery was a bit dry.”

Plays about affairs are commonplace. The common places in this play are an affair unlike any other. Written by a woman from a man’s point of view “Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes” is not what it seems to be; instead it is the opposite of our expectations. Jon Macklem, played by Christopher Patrick Mullen, is a college professor and successful novelist whose personal life is much less than expected. Separated from his third wife he lives in a world of unexpected reality seen from an author’s viewpoint. Nothing is grounded in reality; everything bears the essence of fiction. When he meets a neighbor, a 19 year old student who admires him and is in one of his classes, he finds himself awkwardly drawn to her. Ultimately he cannot resist her and that leads them both into dangerous territory. Hannah Moscovitch, the author, allows Annie, played by Abby Burris, to become much more to Jon than she is to herself in this eleven sequence play. What comes true in this Canadian play’s excellent finale is the play we see on stage at Bridge Street Theatre in Catskill, New York at its American premiere.



Christopher Patrick Mullen, Abby Burris; Photo: John Sowle

The author claims this, in her program note, as a complete work of fiction although her character writes a play about the affair we witness from the man’s place in the play and Jon narrates the experience from start to finish and only loses that control of the facts of the affair at

the final moment of the 90 minute one-act presentation. Her reality takes over his reality and leaves us, as well as him, breathless. This gives the play a singularity that is both unusual and provocative. What remains of the comedy of errors that is the affair between Annie and Jon turns tragically realistic, overwhelmingly disturbing. Or, one might say, fascinating theatre.



Christopher Patrick Mullen, Abby Burris;
Photo: John Sowle

In her professional debut Abby Burris is extraordinary, handling the many variations of mood with a professional ease that is remarkable. It leaves open no end of possibility for a career based not on her beauty but on the beauty of her work. Witnessing such an impressive start to an actor's future is worth the price of admission and would be even in a vehicle less worthy. She is someone you really must see if you love theatre as I do.

Christopher Patrick Mullen is a dynamic actor who constantly startles us with his virulent, violent Jon who can be confused and hampered by the girl in the red coat, even after three wives and a host of other relationships, real and fictional. He is superb in this role, an actor acting a man acting the way he thinks he must. Jon's often

perplexed reactions to what is happening, to what he is doing, to what Annie is doing, give Mullen the opportunity to portray a man who is less than he believes and more than he anticipates. This is a tour-de-force role for an excellent actor.

Director Margo Whitcomb has physically orchestrated the play using these two actors as her instruments. I found myself transfixed by what was happening every minute the actors were on stage. She is ably assisted by the creative team at Bridge Street: John Sowle's sets and lights, Michelle Rogers costumes and Whitcomb's own sound design.

Even the title of this play is not what it first appears to be, so when you see the play leave your first impressions in your car. For this author words have impact and you certainly feel that in every scene. It's run in Catskill is a short one so waste no time. Book your tickets today.

+ 10/15/2022 +

Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes plays at Bridge Street Theatre, 44 W. Bridge Street, Catskill, NY through October 23. For information and tickets call 518-943-3894 or go on line at www.BridgeSt.org.

