

Berkshire Theatre Group, Stockbridge, MA

Seascape by Edward Albee. Directed by Eric Hill. Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

"I'd rather remember."

It was in early 1975 that I first saw Edward Albee's allegorical play "Seascape" starring Deborah Kerr, Barry Nelson, Frank Langella and Maureen Anderman. It announced to close and I was a big Albee fan who hadn't seen this play. At the time, I shudder to admit, allegorical work didn't always enthrall me. Apparently I wasn't alone; the play only ran for 65 performances. Later I read the play and was equally confounded by it. Living as long as I have, I confess, allegory is no longer a foreign form or a distant place. It is now; it is here; it is all around me in the worst ways. In 1975 I adored the players and wished they were playing something else, but now, after seeing the Berkshire Theatre Group's current production of the play, directed by Eric Hill, I still adore the actors and wish I could revisit the play again while it's here. What struck me then as pretentious and a time-waster, now seems to me the most insightful look at evolution and naturalism with an unbeatable message to Americans old and young.



David Adkins, Kate Goble, Tim Jones, Corinna May; Photo: Emma K. Rothenberg-Ware

While I cannot create a better company in my mind than that original foursome, the BTG has assembled a group that last night, on the stage of the Unicorn Theatre in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, simply blew me away. David Adkins as Charlie with his wife Corinna May as

Charlie's wife, Nancy, Tim Jones as Leslie and Kate Goble as Sarah took the stage and took me with them from the first line to the last line. It isn't easy finding the right dynamics for this play, but Adkins and May, in the longer first act, set up a rhythm and a pattern of inter-relationship chatter that transforms the allegorical second act into a severe attack of reality in a situation that shouldn't work. However, it does. Fantasy plays out as reality and the confrontations with the two couples become more than imaginary commentary. They open up reality and thrive mightily.

Adkins is vocally brutal and May is his direct opposite. They are Albee's George and Martha with their attitudes exchanged, though May's Nancy is still the dominant personality in spite of Charlie's blustering and his constant babbling. It has always been fun watching this couple battle out relationships on stage and this time is no different. Retirement is the issue that drags them into conference; she has ideas and he has reluctance. The two will never move ahead without compromise and Charlie is reluctant to take that step. Adkins reduces us to aggravated tears as he resists May's varied pleas for consideration, but she makes it very clear that Charlie's reluctance cannot stop Nancy's dreams from becoming her new reality.



Corinna May, David Adkins; Photo: Jacey Rae Russell

Then they meet the play's second couple, Leslie and Sarah. I hate to spoil this for you, but these two, though natives, are not what they seem. They are definitively foreign to the American way and are eventually brought along by Nancy's insistent manner. They are, to be very clear about it, lizards in the most vital way. Tim Jones is another Charlie. Like Adkins' character Jones gives Leslie an angry manner without any real backbone to support it. His acting is strong, as is his voice, and his mannerisms are often threatening, but behind the threat is confusion and disillusionment. He is terrific. His life-partner (how contemporary is that) is sweet and charming with a spine that bends as needed but holds strong in most things. Kate Goble plays this role with a femininity that could bore holes into rock. The two of them threaten to dominate the play, but director Hill has held them to his vision of the play, the ultimate fair exchange of ideas and ideologies that engages the four of them in a new reality.

Technically the play is a winner. Randall Parsons has designed a set that gave me an appetite for a Long Island vacation. Elivia Bovenzi Blitz has delivered costumes that both charm and alarm aided by astounding make-up design. Matthew E. Adelson's lighting design provides that late summer sunlight that we all are beginning to miss during the day outside. The original music and sound design by Scott Killian are wonderful. Movement director Isadora Wolfe has

conjured up the characters brilliantly and the fight direction by Tim Jones is as good as his performance of half of it (Adkins has the other half).

Altogether Eric Hill has brought me into the tight circle of “Seascape” appreciators, something that hadn’t happened until now. If someone would stretch backward and present Albee’s 1964 play, “Tiny Alice” which was playing when the author began to draft “Seascape,” I would be one very happy Critic. Although, now that I am thinking along these lines, if I really like the current play might I think less of the earlier one should I see it now? I hope not. As a friend of mine said recently, “Does anyone really like those characters in Albee’s play *Who’s Afraid of Virgin Wolves?*” I do; I’m not afraid of those “wolves” and Charlie, faced with the terrifying lizards in last night’s play, gets over his fear and anxiety. At least I think he does.

+ 10/02/2022 +

Seascape plays at the Berkshire Theatre Group’s Unicorn Theatre on the Larry Vaber Stage, 6 East Street, Stockbridge, MA through October 23. For information and tickets call 413-997-4444 or go on-line to www.BerkshireTheatreGroup.org.