

*Love, Milly and Murray* by T. Emerson. Directed by Sheila Siragusa.  
Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

**“If one of us goes we both lose.”**

At age 75, with 57 years of marriage behind them Millie and Murray are both debating their future together. Both have ailments, see multiple doctors and share their diagnoses with a touch of reluctance. Together since the age of eighteen, they resolve to stay together until the end comes for one of them and then the other will arrange to die as well. That’s the basic plot of this comedy about a wedding anniversary that seems to be going wrong. It’s the winter of 2005, literally their winter of discontent. Problems persist but if they can dance together and share puns all may be right with the world, at least in their home.



Julie Nelson and John Thomas Waite; Photo: Rick Teller

Their kitchen is where the play takes place, a nice warm spot in the home they’ve shared all these years. Designed by Bev Stevens Browne & Greg Trochlil it is everything you would expect, attractive, simple, functional. Millie, played by Julie Nelson, thrives in this room; so much of her life has been centered here. Her husband Murray, played by John Thomas Waite, takes up space there although it is clear that he is indulged by his wife and shares the room with her out of love. . .her love. They are two people too much in love to ever desert one another. That is lovely but it is also the tipper of their scales, their balance. The comfort they exude makes the play a bit too predictable. Though there are surprises along the way they quickly fade into memory along with their own memories that bind them to this place. Early in the play we are

signalled the ending and we wait for it to come as it surely must, and it does. Dying together as they've lived together is the dream and as we know, we playgoers, dreams aren't always what they seem.

Julie Nelson is a dream of complacency. Her portrayal of Millie is so perfect that every moment is a joy. Whether well or ill she brings so much reality to her character that we find ourselves adoring her as much as Murray does. Her voice is sweet but not always compliant as she counters his negativity with her own understanding. Her hands are as expressive as her smile. She embodies Millie perfectly. As her emotional and physical counterpart, and counterpoint, Murray, John Thomas Waite is a verbalized man whose failing physicality doesn't matter to him. In one long sequence he attempts to urinate but her everyday activity makes it almost impossible. Waite plays Murray's impatience and perturbation with so much honesty I felt sympathy for both the character and the actor. Together they are an adorable pair and even their resolve to stay a couple in all things struck a chord of honesty and hope. We, the audience, silently say a prayer for them.

Director Sheila Siragua allows these two players to merge into the singularity of marriage and co-existence beautifully. She has never given them a "stage" moment; instead it is all as natural and real as can be. When Millie falls ill, Murray is her comfort. When he exhibits his uncommon tendency to dance she is there with him, following, leading, merging with his moments. In this somewhat slim play it is this physical work that the director has given them that keeps it real and honest and lets the play work its own specific magic.

Costumes by Dawn McKay work well and the uncredited sound designer provides a wonderful combination of reality and the couple's imagined music. The lighting design by Daniel D. Rist underscores the play's moods perfectly.

A decent play in a swell production, this delivers nicely and should be seen.

+ 11/19/2022 +



J. T. Waite and Julie Nelson; Photo: Rick Teller

**Love, Milly and Murray** plays at the Majestic Theater, 131 Elm Street, West Springfield, MA through December 4. For information and tickets go to: [www.majestictheater.com](http://www.majestictheater.com).