

Capital Repertory Theater (theRep), Albany, NY  
**Secret Hour** by Jenny Stafford. Directed by Margaret E. Hall.  
Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

“Humanity didn’t want my habitat.”

Ethics and omissions lie at the heart of Jenny Stafford’s play “Secret Hour” now playing its world premiere performances at theRep in Albany, New York. The secret hour is the time when a married couple tell one another their secrets to help keep their marriage fresh and alive. Kate and Ben (Marina Shay and Joshua David Robinson) share this time regularly and expose secrets that often have absolutely no impact on their partners. They are striving to get pregnant and each has a secret they will not reveal. Ethically they violate their own rule and inevitably they are found out.



Joshua David Robinson and Marina Shay

Kate is a college professor seeking permanence on the faculty who teaches ethics - this term is devoted to Nietzsche and Confucius. Her students are charged with honesty, a tribute she herself cannot manage to uphold. Ben is an engineer without a job, unwilling to confess to his wife how he lost his job and what his

plans may be for the future. They live in a beautiful house (a gorgeous set designed by David McQuillen Robertson) and seem to have a permanent handyman named Leaf played by Whit K. Lee who lives in a tree house and actually knows all of his employers' secrets. As both comic relief and moralizing conscience, Lee is a brilliant addition to a wonderful cast; both Shay and Robinson dominate their moments on stage making the play more than a tale of thwarted ethics and misplaced trust.



Marina Shay and Whit K. Lee

Stafford's play is a story of true love and its cost through human nature, No one loves Ben and Kate more than Leaf; he is their substitute child, though they are all reluctant to see that, or at least to acknowledge it. Sometimes, it would seem, true love is just not enough to keep a couple happily together, yet it cannot really ever break the bond it creates.

Excellent, realistic costumes by Andrea Adamczyk, and perfect mood lighting by Travis McHale enhance Margaret E. Hall's fine direction of this not so easy play. She triumphs in the hospital scene and moves above and beyond that in the play's second half (this is a 90 minute one-act play). Hall's importance to the development of the play cannot be under-or over-estimated. Yvonne Perry's work as Intimacy Coach has clearly made a difference to the first half of the work.

While some may think there is an unhappy ending to this comedy, there is definite consolation discovering that feelings are everlasting even when propinquity is no longer possible. Each character in this delectable comedy has a resolution to realize: three answers to the problem of the Secret Hour that has kept

them all together for so long. You just have to see for yourself how this happens.

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**Secret Hour** plays at theRep, 251 North Pearl Street, Albany, NY through February 19, For tickets and information go to [capitalrep.org](http://capitalrep.org) or call 518-346-6204.