

Dorset Theatre Festival, Dorset, VT  
**STILL** by Lia Romeo. Directed by Adrienne Campbell-Holt.  
Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

*“I thought you lost the girl, too.”*

Sometimes a play is just a play. Lia Romeo’s “Still” directed by Adrienne Campbell-Holt and having its world premiere at the Dorset Theatre Festival is just that: a play. Its characters tease and play with one another. They are meeting for a drink, the first time in thirty years, and their previous passion has been replaced with repartee. She has published four novels; he has read them. He is divorced after twenty-nine years of marriage; she knew his wife. He is about to run for Congress; she remembers his politics as being quite different. He wants to make love to her; she has fears of her body being seen. It’s just your typical reunion of former lovers, at least in the theater these days (Great Barrington Public Theater just produced a similar play, “Off Peak”; long lost abortion is a most common topic lately as well). What makes this play different is the writing and the acting: lyricism replaces cynicism and we have Jayne Atkinson and Tim Daly to listen to and observe.



Tom Daly, Jayne Atkinson; Photo: Joey Moro

These two actors are something quite special, each a star creating an ensemble piece in which neither one takes prominence and unanticipated things take place. Atkinson plays the ukelele and sings. Daly gets naked and is attacked by an avocado.



Jayne Atkinson; Photo: Joey Moro

“Madame Secretary.”

Atkinson plays the former lover with incredible gentleness and make Helen into a wronged woman without expressing guilt, verbally or physically. It is fascinating to watch her open up about Helen’s life, dropping one sordid fact after another but never apologizing or casting aspersions. She makes her character’s honesty about life into a sexual taunt but she never adds either remorse or the potential for it into her being. She is a physical

wonder whose verbal abuses are much more painful than her flying ukelele or her cashews. It is a remarkable performance.



Jayne Atkinson, Tim Daly; Photo: Joey Moro



Tim Daly

The play has two sets, beautifully designed by Alexander Woodward. Barbara A. Bell has created a single costume for each actor and her clothing defines each of them perfectly. Reza Behjat has used a form of natural lighting which obscures nudity and, for me, faces. Hidenori Nakajo has created a sound design that defines the urban locale of the play.

Director Campbell-Holt has done her job well. The two characters claim the stage and the actors disappear inside them. She was the director of Theresa Rebeck’s “Downstairs” which Tim and Tyne Daly introduced at Dorset Theatre Festival and took to New York City. She was involved with Daly’s last television series

Daly plays the role of a man unable to easily express himself who craves a political position that he may not be right for. It seems his character, Mark, realizes his limitations but refuses to acknowledge them. Instead he works on seduction and almost succeeds in achieving his goals. We’re never truly certain what those goals may be, but he lets us guess.

Lia Romeo’s play has a poetic sense in a non-poetic format. Her characters are interesting, their histories compelling and their futures uncertain. She

have given them the opportunity to grow, but instead they shrink and in doing so shrink away from one another. This is a somewhat unusual direction, but - again - not the first time seen this season (“Off Peak” by Brenda Withers takes the same sort of direction in its two-character relationship). In its seventy-two minute run, “Still” delivers fine theater to an appreciative audience.

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**Still** runs at the Dorset Theatre Festival, 104 Cheney Road, Dorset, Vermont through August 5. For information and tickets go to [dorsettheatrefestival.org](http://dorsettheatrefestival.org) or call (802) 867-2223 ext. 101.