

Barrington Stage Company, Pittsfield, MA
tiny father, a World Premiere co-production with Chautauqua Theater Company,
By Mike Lew. Directed by Moritz von Stuelpnagel
Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman

“Me and her mom had a kind of arrangement?”

A man is on a journey from a place of semi-interest to a spot where caring is everything. It is a reluctant voyage through time with its eventual outcome uncertain. His ship for this trip is an infant born prematurely at 26 weeks. His rudder is stuck on the equatorial line taking him onward toward the same place where he started, but he finds a navigator in a sea-blue uniform who helps him turn the tide. This is the play “tiny father,” written by Mike Lew, directed by Moritz von Stuelpnagel. This is a World Premiere production on Barrington Stage Company’s St. Germain stage in the Sydelle and Lee Blatt Performing Arts Center in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. This is fascinating theater, just what theater should be.



Andy Lucien & Jennifer Ikeda; Photo: Daniel Rader

Daniel is a young black man with no prior experience with children. He is a reluctant father, a man who agreed to help his occasional sex partner, now-and-then girl friend have her baby that he probably fathered. Helping her get through the experience is the extent of his commitment. Strangely, and these things usually are strange, he ends up being the only existing adult in the child’s life. He’s just a bit of a father, an outline of a Dad. The play follows his journey over a four month period during which he evolves into a man he never suspected existed.

Andy Lucien plays Daniel. The actor has been here before, part of the company of “Clybourne Park.” This character he plays is new to us, however. He is an attractive man whose physicality instantly explains the baby’s mother’s attraction to Daniel. Her emotional attachment to the child is visible in the outcome of the birth when both suffer similarly. We never meet her and it seems that Daniel may have never really met her either. Their attraction was sexual, not

romantic and the outcome is less than normally tied up. Daniel becomes the only existing close relative, stuck with being a father, a tiny, temporary one. Lucien plays the young man with a very decisive set of ideals and confusions and it is wonderful to watch him evolve. His journey has a resonance that is never contemplated at the beginning of the play. That makes for wonderful theater.

Caroline, the nurse, is played by Jennifer Ikeda, making her debut with Barrington Stage in this play. Caroline is a pragmatist and a cynic. She does things by the book and has learned not to get too involved with her patients or their families. Married, a mother of two, she does her job faithfully and hopes for more time at home, something she rarely gets. Daniel has a peculiar effect on her. Who he is and what he is pull her onto his journey and she helps guide him safely to harbor in spite of his protestations about his seemingly intended destination. Ikeda is remarkably off-hand in playing Caroline's attitude. She gives us dispassion disguising interest; she plays the reality without supposition. It's a grand performance of simple layers masking deeper sensibilities. The two actors, under von Stuelpnagel's careful direction, forge a romance that never exists but cannot be denied.



Jennifer Ikeda; Photo: Daniel Rader



Andy Lucien; Photo: Daniel Rader

A perfect set designed by Wilson Chin, the right costumes by Tilly Grimes and expert lighting by Allen C. Edwards complete this fine picture of a play. Daniela Hart's eventually aggressive sound design threatens to take the journey to a place of oddness; it's the only defect in this wonderful show that should be seen.

+ 06/30/2023 +

tiny father plays on Barrington Stage Company's St. Germain Stage at the Sydelle and Lee Blatt

Performing Arts Center, 36 Linden Street, Pittsfield, MA through July 22. For information and tickets go on-line to barringtonstageco.com or call 413-236-8888.