

Chester Theatre Company, Chester, MA

Will Sacrifice by Julie McKee. Directed by Keira Naughton.

Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

“My glass is half full.”

Bridget hates her life in New York City. The cramped studio apartment she shares with her husband, out-of-work actor Nigel, has created the monster inside of her. She craves space, nature, freedom of many sorts. It is not that she is a terrible person, she just wants and needs much more to live a satisfying life. Bridget adores her reticent husband, but threatens to end their long relationship if she can't have what she wants so badly. She is easy to understand in Julie McKee's play "Will Sacrifice", having its world premiere performances at Chester Theatre.



Ken Cheeseman, Catherine Lloyd Burns Photo: Andrew Greto

Catherine Lloyd Burns plays Bridget who takes matters into her own hands with the money she has saved over a lengthy marriage. She finds an area she likes, finds a realtor she mostly trusts and finds five houses she could live in and sets about making her dream into a reality. What she doesn't find is half the play. Her inherent distrust of people, bred into her by a lifetime of disappointment and hard work, makes her decision-making difficult. When she finally settles on something and makes it happen she lives to both regret her decision and to enjoy the life she has always craved. But life is strange. It brings things unexpected and unanticipated. She is a strong woman, however, and she tolerates what life gives her.

Burns is terrific. She plays the worst and best with equal strength. She gives us a Bridget who deserves more than she has achieved and sets out to rectify this. Her voice is grating and her physical movements are harsh befitting a woman in the midst of personal tragedy. But she is endearingly comic and ultimately loveable.

Her husband, Nigel, is played by Ken Cheeseman, Beckett personality, who creates a very compelling man of negativity. He wants more of what he already has and not much else. He is pulled along by his wife into a life he does not want. Cheeseman plays this role with an expert cynicism that smacks of reality. He is the opposite to Burns' Bridget and the two make a beautiful if awkward couple. When he reveals his secrets our surprise is genuine.

The third major character, the realtor named Sunshine, is anything but that descriptor. He is grossly funny and tremendously abusive through his work. He mistreats Bridget and convinces her to do things she is against. Greg Stuhl plays him very well, and also plays his own brother later in the play. Both characters are well-developed by Stuhl.

Keira Laughton has done a beautiful job putting this show on its feet. There is a flow and a definition of space that works wonderfully. She has had the aid of a design team that does

wonders with the small stage in the Town Hall space in Chester, Massachusetts. The facile set designed by Travis George works wonders along with Matt Witton's perfect projections. The sound design by David Wiggall is magical in its realism.

The true magic, however, is in the hands of Lara Dubin, lighting designer, who gives us an enlightened view of Nigel and Bridget's love for one another. She ends the play with warmth that

is unexpected. This world premiere deserves a longer run thanks to this production.



Catherine Lloyd Burns
Photo: Andrew Greto



Greg Stuhl, Catherine Lloyd Burns; Photo: Andrew Greto

Will Sacrifice plays at the Town Hall Theater in Chester, Massachusetts through August 4.
For information and tickets go to vhestertheatre.org or call (413) 354-7771.