

Shakespeare & Co., Lenox, MA  
a co-production with Great Barrington Public Theatre  
*Flight of the Monarch*, by Jim Frangione. Directed by Judy Braha.  
Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman

**“Nobody escapes this family unscathed.”**

It’s been a season of plays about abusive couples. This one is different; they are not married, they are brother and sister and they have their problems which include a missing daughter, a second sister and a deceased mother’s peculiar legacy. They are Cape Codders, complete with accents and attitudes. Act One is set in a hospital room dedicated to mental patients and Act Two is in her home. Both are appropriately designed by Patrick Brennan. The cast is also appropriately designed: Allyn Burrows is Thomas Callaghan; Corinna May is his sister Sheila Callaghan. Perfect casting!



Allyn Burrows, Corinna May; Photo: Nile Scott Studios



Allyn Burrows; Photo: Nile Scott Studios

Sheila has had an accident - not her first - and Thomas is visiting her, against his better judgement and also her wishes. The act is devoted to back story as much as it is to the ongoing plot and problems. There is almost too much of the former and the latter feels a bit intrusive. It all pays off, however, in Act Two when both aspects of their lives converge in odd conversation and hesitation in planning solutions. This is especially true when Thomas talks about his relationship with a Monarch Butterfly which represents the soul of their long-dead mother.

Corinna May is just plain brilliant in this play and Allyn Burrows is right up there with her. Their Cape Cod accents are almost perfect (his slips occasionally) and their familial attitudes couldn't be better. Sheila is a slattern and Tom is a man-of-all-work with little work to do. A perennial busy-body he intrudes on her life and life decisions. Burrows handles these aspects of his character flawlessly. She is an independent thinker who acts according to her mood; she doesn't make decisions, she lives them instead. May brings an amazing style and credibility to Sheila and that gives the play its credible ending. The flight of the monarch is its multi-generational death trip and that becomes a motif for the play, the players and the unseen characters in Jim Frangione's fascinating play.

Costumes have been designed by



Corinna May; Photo: Nile Scott Studios



Allyn Burrows, Corinna May; Photo: Nile Scott Studios

Christina Beam and lighting by James **Bilnoski**. Sound is courtesy of Stage Manager Rachel Harrison. The production in the Bernstein Theatre works very well. All of the above is the product of hard work by director Judy Braha who been involved in developing the Frangione play, taking it through multiple endings and rewrites through the rehearsal period. This is old-fashioned theater work and it works as well now as it ever did to provide an end product that is

informing, entertaining and engaging. Shakes and Co has given this creative team the time to develop the regional premiere (really a world premiere) of an interesting and difficult play, one that should have a delectable future.

+ 08/05/2024 +

**Flight of the Monarch** plays on the Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre at Shakespeare & CO, 70 Kemble Street, Lenox, Massachusetts through August 25. For information and tickets go to [Shakespeare.org](http://Shakespeare.org) or call 413-637-3353.