

Harbinger Theatre. Sand Lake Center or the Arts, Averill Park, NY

Att the Wedding by Bryna Turner. Directed by Chris Foster.

Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

“Risk joy!”

Every play teaches a lesson. Here “At The Wedding” goes beyond that and teaches us, through comedy, many things about the human condition and the various choices we all take into consideration in our lives. In the play Carlo, a devout lesbian, crashes a wedding she was actually invited to (but didn’t accept), and attempts in many small ways to disrupt. The bride, Eva, is Carlo’s lovely ex-girlfriend. Carlo is played by Maghen Ryan-Adair and she is practically never off stage. During her time at the event Carlo

confronts many other people including Maria, the bride’s mother, two other women and a man named Eli who hopes to propose marriage to his girlfriend during the reception, as well as a waiter/bartender named Victor. Traditionally a comedy is a play in which nobody dies; in this play the only way to die is by laughing too hard and long which on opening night nobody did.

Their laughter was too sustaining and reaffirming.



Maghen Ryan-Adair, Alexia Halsey; Photo: Jason Zuppardi for Best Frame Forward.



Maghen Ryan-Adair, Jennifer Schnurr;
Photo: Jason Zuppardi
for Best Frame Forward.

Eva, in a stunning gown designed by Lisa Morgan whose costumes were all perfect, was played by Alexia Halsey who was beautiful to behold and equally beautiful a character to listen to as she explained and over-explained her motives and her choices. Halsey never gave us a devoted gay woman marrying a man for one of those odd reasons that bring gay people to simulate straight life, but rather a woman whose strength lay in her devotion to her own happiness over everything else. It is a lovely

and realistic performance.

As Maria, her mother, dressed in gold and glorious in it, Amy Hausknecht delivers nicely as the woman's alcoholism takes over her nightlife. The actress makes it clear that there is no actual judgement in her choices but rather a sense of very personal need at extreme moments in life. Hausknecht is as funny in her intentions as Halsey is warm in hers. Her dialogue with Carlo, her daughter's former lover, has all the piquancy we would expect, and she pulls it off very well.



Amy Hausknecht, Maghen Ryan-Adair;
Photo: Jason Zuppardi
for Best Frame Forward.

Carlo's encounters with two other women at the wedding include the woman Eli hopes to marry, a slightly lesbian figure, and another woman Carlo finds very attractive. In the many scenes they share Carlo pushes her agenda, even debating stealing a wedding gift to get some personal satisfaction. Jennifer Schnurr played Carly (not Marly) and Rachel Stewart plays Leigh (sadly, Maria only has one scene). Both women did fine jobs with their very different characters.

Victor, the wedding bartender handles his role well, and his snide looks and attitudes were extremely pertinent to his moments on stage. Adam Sauter did a nice job playing this unfortunate man. On the other hand Eli, the impossible to discourage or bring down young swain was played delightfully by Ben Amey whose good-natured delivery never failed to please.



Maghen Ryan-Adair, Ben Amey;
Photo: Jason Zuppardi
for Best Frame Forward.

But the star of this show was undoubtedly Maghen Ryan-Adair. In her blue velour suit she moved from scene to scene almost uninterrupted. She played almost every conceivable emotion and motivation. She seemed never to tire, like someone on mucho alcohol or drugs, and her motivations remained clear and untrammelled. As Carlo she played a believable character we might never want to meet but if we did she'd be the subject of cocktail chatter for weeks afterward. Hearing Ryan-Adair speak in the talk-back after the show it was clear that Carlo was a character and not the actress. A job truly well done!

The set, designed by Chuck Kutik worked well in its simplicity and the lighting design by David S. Caso illuminated what we were meant to see. Foster's direction gave us seven well-grounded characters in multiple relationships with one another and everything was clear, clean and effective.

+ 06/06/2025 +

At the Wedding plays at the Sand Lake Center, 2880 Rte.43 in Averill Park, NY through June 15. For information and tickets go to www.slca-ctp.org.

