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Some hits, misses in drama about various stages of life

Butler, McIntyre share some memorable moments in one-acter at Liverpool theatre festival

ANDREA NEMETZ AT LITF 2010
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Rob McIntyre and Angela Butler star in Theatre Arts Guild's production of Alone presented Sunday at the Liverpool International Theatre Festival. (Eric Wynne / Staff)



Alone was inspired by, and includes, the famous Shakespearean quote, "All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts."

The original one-act play, written by Halifax's Nick Jupp for the Theatre Arts Guild to take to the Liverpool International Theatre Festival, explores five stages in the life of a man or woman.

It begins with a woman left alone for the first time with a newborn. Next are a preteen boy and girl who suddenly begin to realize the other sex exists.

A college-age couple ponder a deepening of their relationship, while a long-standing marriage is rocked by an affair.

Finally, an elderly woman comes to terms with caring for her husband, who has dementia.

It was the final segment that had the most impact when the Halifax amateur theatre group presented the 50-minute work at the Astor Theatre on Sunday afternoon.

Angela Butler, who played each of the five female roles, impressively expressed the range of emotions of the aging woman realizing what the rest of her life would be like — sadness that her husband no longer

recognizes her, anger that she must deal with memories of what was and what she has lost while he has no memory of anything, terror that she must take care of his physical needs after he soils his pants, and resignation that this is the part she must play till the end of his life.

It was made more poignant because she uses the same words as when she was a young mother with an infant in the first scene.

The woman with the baby, while terrified of the unknown, is excited and hopeful about what their life together will be like. The elderly woman tries to be strong but is weeping inside, knowing her husband is no longer there to provide emotional support.

Rob McIntyre as the husband adds depth with his innocently puzzled and fearful

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expressions. The reality of the situation is beyond his comprehension, but it is obvious he feels its shadow.

McIntyre is also memorable as the 12-year-old boy who wants only to climb trees and for life not to change, while Butler, as the 12-year-old girl who fancies him, tries to show him what the future might hold.

Each segment questions what it means to be alone. For example, is taking a cheating husband back too high a price to pay for not being alone? Is being with someone you know and care for worth giving up all the future someones who might be out there?

The inclusion of a chorus — Chris and Patti Morse and Jamie and Carolyn Boyer — is an interesting idea, but needs to be further developed. Dressed head to toe in black, they express curiosity or shock or turn their backs on the main players. But overall, they don't add that much. They should be given more to do — if that can be accomplished without taking any focus off the main players — or dispensed with.

The five-day festival wrapped up Sunday.

(anemetz@herald.ca)

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