Fall 10-17-2002

Marvin's Room

Department of Theatre, Florida International University

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FIU Theatre Presents

MARVIN'S ROOM

A play by Scott McPherson
Directed by Therald Todd

October 17-20 and 24-27, 2002
Studio Theatre, Wertheim Performing Arts Center

Drama Desk Award for Best Play
Dramatists Guild Hull-Warriner Award
John Gassner Award
Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Off-Broadway Play
From the Director

When a director chooses a play, he/she will inevitably be asked: "What do you like about this play? Why did you choose it?" To answer this question must I go back to my first encounter with the play. By the time I first read Marvin's Room I had heard enough about the play to have formed some pre-conceptions. I knew that it was about a woman caring for a dying father who finds out she may well be facing death herself. I also knew that when he wrote the play, the playwright's companion was dying of AIDS and that he himself was suffering from the same disease. As I sat down to read the play I fully expected a heavy dose of over-wrought emotion ending with a either a bleak conclusion or, what would be worse, a sentimental optimism-in-the-face-of-adversity message.

I discovered that my expectations were unfounded. Instead of bathos I found humor, not the black humor common in modern theatre, but rather a gentle humor based upon some very distinctive, very quirky but very believable characters. The play is full of emotion-laden situations, but there is no obvious emotionalism. The intensely emotion moments are written with an almost terse understatement which gives them a powerful impact through the skillful use of what we in the theatre call "subtext", the real meaning and emotion that lies beneath what is said. The ending could be called upbeat, but in an honest real life-like way, not in the form of phony. I ended my first reading with the vow "I am going to direct this play someday."

Now that the "someday" has come and after the close engagement of a rehearsal period, my belief in worth of the play has only been strengthened. It is a very special play that should speak to an audience in a simple, honest yet moving, and even profound way.

Therald Todd

About the Play

For every happy, "traditional" family, there's one that fits under the broad envelope of "dysfunctional" Marvin's Room is one of those plays that digs beneath the thinly-applied varnish covering the gaping holes in a series of sundered family relationships. What begins an apparently simple story of family interaction reveals a complex web of pain, guilt, and uncertainty.

You wouldn't think that a play about a gentle woman dying of cancer could be quite so funny and tender, but it is. Scott McPherson's play Marvin's Room debuted on stage in New York in 1991, and went off to receive many awards including the Dramatists Guild Hull-Warriner Award and the John Gassner Award. It is the Winner of the 1991-1992 Outer Critics Circle Award for best Off-Broadway Play and the 1991-1992 Drama Desk Award for Best Play.

Sadly, playwright Scott McPherson died shortly after this play became a hit in New York, but not before writing the screenplay for the movie that debuted in December 1996, starring Diane Keaton and Meryl Streep.

About the Playwright

Scott McPherson was born and raised in Ohio and in the early 1980's migrated to Chicago with his first play tucked under his arm. 'Till the fat lady sings, a partly autobiographical black comedy about a college boy returning home for his brother's funeral, the dysfunctional family vibe carried through in Marvin's Room. 'Till the fat lady sings, was produced in 1986 by Chicago's Lifeline Theatre.

In 1987, McPherson began working on separate projects, including character and dialogue studies based on his Florida relatives, and a one act about the business of AIDS testing—which would eventually merge to become Marvin's Room. McPherson found it difficult to write directly about AIDS and realized that he could use Bessie's medical predicament as a stand-in.

Audiences seemed struck most intensely by McPherson's quirky humor, which is expressed through his marginal characters. Scott McPherson, the gay author of this award winning play, died resulting from AIDS on November 7, 1992.
MARVIN'S ROOM
By Scott McPherson

Director ............................................. Therald Todd
Costume Designer ................................. Daniela Schwimmer
Scenographer ...................................... Craig Young
Voice and Speech Coach ....................... Lesley-Ann Timlick
Technical Director ............................... David Whitlock

CAST
BESSIE ............................................... Katie Perry
DR. WALLY ......................................... Meshaun Labrone Arnold
RUTH .................................................. Crystal Edn
BOB .................................................... Ramon Veunes
LEE ..................................................... Karen M. Garcia
DR. CHARLOTTE ................................. Sally G. Dane
HANK ................................................ Ivan R. Lopez
CHARLIE ............................................ Yecid Benavides
DIRECTOR ........................................ Jennifer Rumberger
MARVIN .............................................. Matt Szymanski

SETTING
Action takes place in 1989 in Florida and Ohio.

THERE WILL BE ONE INTERMISSION

"Marvin's Room" is produced under special arrangement with Dramatist Play Service, Inc.
The Theatre program offers two degrees: a Bachelor of Arts (BA) and a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA). The program is ideal in size, large enough to be able to offer a wide range of courses taught by varied, well-qualified faculty and to support an active production program, yet small enough that every student receives personal attention.

The Theatre and Dance Department has an active production program. We currently present four Main Stage and two Second Stage productions a year plus one Main Dance Presentation consisting of choreography by FIU Dance Faculty and several guests. In addition to the Department productions there are student produced shows presented by the Showcase Players.

The Herbert and Nicole Wertheim Performing Arts Center is home to both the Department of Music and the Department of Theatre and Dance it includes a beautiful 250-seat proscenium theatre, a large black box Studio Theatre, a costume shop, a scene shop, 2 dressing rooms and a green room.

We are now forming and seeking interested individuals to help organize Friends of FIU Theatre. This is an excellent opportunity to help us enhance the programs and facilities at FIU. Some of the goals include acquiring new furniture for the Green Room, framing posters from previous productions, putting on fund-raising events and generating community involvement.

If you are interested in learning more about the program or becoming a friend of FIU Theatre, please call or write for more information.

Florida International University
Department of Theatre and Dance Wertheim Performing Arts Center
University Park Campus, PAC 131
Miami, Fl 33199
Phone (305) 348-2895 Fax (305)348-1803
Theatre Box Office: (305) 348-3789

Upcoming Productions
Catch our next show “A Streetcar Named Desire”

Marvin’s Room
By Scott McPherson
Directed by Theroidal Todd
October 17-20 and 24-27, 2002

A Streetcar Named Desire
By Tennessee Williams
Directed by Leroy Clark
November 14-17 and 21-24, 2002

MOUTH OF THE RIVER
Written and Directed by Patricia Dolan
December 6-7, 2002

HOT L BALTIMORE
By Lanford Wilson
Directed by Wayne E. Robinson, Jr.
February 6-9 and 13-16, 2002

Mosshead
By William Whitehurst
Directed by Leroy Clark
February 20-23, 2003

Celebrate the Classics with FIU Dance
February 27-28, 2003
Main Stage Theatre

Trojan/Courage
Directed by Phillip Church
April 3-6 and 10-13

Brown Bag Workshops
Catch a new play before it goes to Broadway! These lunch-time workshops can be seen on the first Friday of every month in DM 150. Free and open to the public.

CALL THE BOX OFFICE TODAY FOR TICKETS
(305) 348-3789
This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KC/ACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to identify and promote quality in college-level theater production. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KC/ACTF representative, and certain students are selected to participate in KC/ACTF programs involving awards, scholarships, and special grants for actors, playwrights, designers, and critics at both the regional and national levels.

Productions entered on the Participating level are eligible for inclusion at the KC/ACTF regional festival and can also be considered for invitation to the KC/ACTF national festival at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC in the spring of 2001.

Last year more than 900 productions and 18,000 students participated in the American College Theater Festival nationwide. By entering this production, our department is sharing in the KC/ACTF goals to help college theater grow and to focus attention on the exemplary work produced in college and university theaters across the nation.

Up-coming FIU Theatre Productions

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

Directed by Leroy Watson Clark

November 14-17 and 21-24, 2002