



Relatively new theatre company mounts 'Heidi Chronicles' production

Starting off their 2017 season, Home Grown Theatre Company launched its newest production, "The Heidi Chronicles" at The Aquarium Theatre (upstairs from The Fishtank Performance Studio), on Friday, Jan. 6 before an enthusiastic (and mostly frozen) audience who braved the plunging temperatures to support their family and friends in this endeavor.

Home Grown Theatre Compay



Feminism and homosexuality make strange bedfellows, but when one adds male chauvinism to the mix, Heidi Holland finds herself entangled in a 25-year search for her individuality and self-confidence. Heidi befriends her friend for life, Peter, a gay man decades ahead of the gay-rights movement. She acquires an arrogant skirt-chaser whose main focus appears to be to get Heidi in bed with him and to carry that affair on

until his marriage to a woman he considers to be his intellectual and emotional lesser. And, Heidi maintains a circle of female friends throughout her life chronicles.

The play by Wendy Wasserstein is directed by Hersh Ellis, a local Kansas City artistic director for Home Grown Theatre. The play start Chrizney Roth, Caleb Tracy and Daniel Verschelden. The three carry the show as the main sources of Heidi's evolution from shy, timid teen to self-confident, assured mother and art history expert.



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The feminist movement comes into play as the play opens with Heidi giving a slide presentation to her Women in Art class as she discusses how women painters remain obscure while men in the same time period flourished. The play flashes back to 1965 when Heidi meets her one true friend for life, Peter Petrone (Caleb Tracy). In the next scene, she encounters Scoop Rosenbaum (Daniel Verschelden) and falls hopelessly in bed with him despite his arrogance and views of women.

While the men in Heidi's life remain integral to the story, her circle of female compatriots allow Heidi's story to evolve and develop. Her evolution comes full circle with help of friends portrayed by Elena Pontecorvo, Caroline Fiss, Stephanie Laaker, Emily Blackwell. Also in the cast and helping tie the pieces together, Sam Chapin covered several smaller parts.

"The Heidi Chronicles," a Pulitzer Prize winning play deserves

to be dusted off and presented to new audiences. The play helps remind the audience of the draft-card burning/bra burning demonstrations of the 1960s and the beginning of the Women's Movement. The play reminds that women were overlooked not only in the Art World, but in the real world. Their time to step out of the shadows had to begin sometime, somewhere. So, too, the gay rights movement in the years preceding the A.I.D.S. crisis, gay rights, gay marriage, and LGBT equality movements. Amazingly, Wasserstein capsulized many forthcoming issues in one play.

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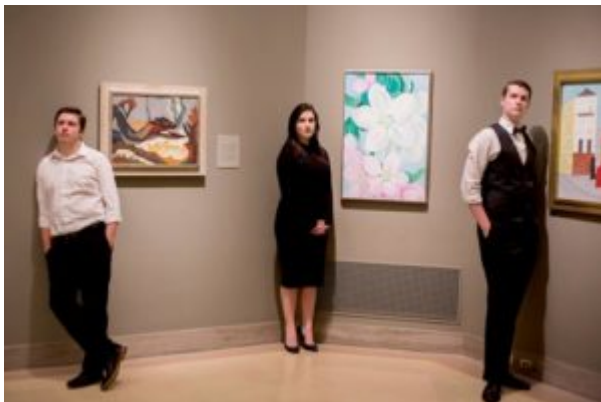
Give lots of credit to the three central characters. Roth, as Heidi, creates a multi-layered character who grows with each scene from a shy intellectual to a spirited, confident woman. Her character development flowed easily into each vignette. So too, Tracy moved from a quirky, limp-wristed intellectual into a sarcastic, witty, dedicated doctor/intellectual. Verschelden remains the character of controversy. While he maintains his nasty arrogance and attitude of intellectual superiority to women, he's a likeable chump, never forced to change. All three of the central characters delivered strong performances.

Of the supporting cast, the one standout was Stephanie Laaker. She commanded the stage and could steal any scene if anyone falters. She developed strong and diverse characters and gave each a separate personality.

"The Heidi Chronicles" creative team, led by Hersh Ellis,

includes: Ryan Casey, stage manager; Sonny Stollman, Caroline Fiss, assistant directors; Sadie Kline, technical director; Ryan Casey, master carpenter; Jamie Lanning, lighting design; Herah Ellis, Sadie Klein, scenic/projection/ media design; Sarah Hellman, properties design; Sam Chapin, Caleb Tracy, costume design; Ashley Fleener, production assistant; Caitie Wolff, director assistant; Ryan Casey, Sadie Klein, Sarah Hellman, production management; A to Z Theatrical, lighting gear supply; Have Guns Will Rent, speciality prop rental.

Of the production crew, nods to the costume design, specifically for capturing the iconic, Brady Bunch garish look of the 1970s. Unfortunately, that 70s look will forever haunt the century.



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“The Heidi Chronicles” brought a host of young talent to the KC Metro Performing Arts to develop their resumes. All are young performers logging their time on the boards awaiting that moment of discovery and a path to bigger and grander productions. Even though new to the KC scene, do not overlook this company or its productions. “The Heidi Chronicles” definitely deserves stronger audience support==even in these freezing temps. The heart-warming journey will create reflective memories and spur conversation and recollections. Attend and see why the play won the coveted Pulitzer Prize.



Home Grown Theatre Compan

Tags: Home Grown Theatre, "The Heidi Chronicles", The Fishtank, Kansas City, Performing Arts, Theater, Kansas City Arts & Entertainment