

The Delicate Business of Boy and Miss Girl

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The Delicate Business of Boy and Miss Girl is an absolute must-see debut from the gifted playwright Carly Mensch, who has written a textured and nuanced absurdist play that deserves much acclaim and a longer life. It's directed with aplomb and great care by Marina McClure, and Odyssey Productions should be incredibly proud of this piece as a representative of all that is great about under-the-radar theater in New York.

The plot is a metaphor for the journey of man and woman through life. The absurdist style keeps the audience slightly disoriented as Boy & Miss Girl meet in a park (Boy is pretending to be a tree), commit to "taking adventures" together (safari, scuba diving, space travel via shoegazing), and then continue to be "killed" by Harold & Harry, a father/son team who go hunting (death 1), fishing (death 2), and purchase an exploding comet (death 3). Each time they die, Boy & Miss Girl get back up again and continue forward together as a team.

Miss Girl calls an adventurer specialist to help them not get killed, who turns out to be a Venture Capitalist. He decides to create a business product out of Boy & Miss Girl and has them sign a contract to enter into partnership (a metaphor for a Commitment/Marriage between Boy & Miss Girl). The Capitalist creates a lunchbox as the product, making stars out of Boy & Miss Girl. Boy is distracted by a character named Grandma, who has a wealth of "adventure experience" that lures him away from Miss Girl (breaking the contract). Devastated, Miss Girl tries to move on from Boy with Harry as a replacement, but ultimately "kills" herself via office supplies.

This piece is brilliantly executed because the director and actors correctly emphasize the plot points that move the metaphor through the intentional "noise" of the dialogue. In absurdist theatre, the directorial challenge is to overcome that noise and let the meaning shine through, like cracks of sunlight that burst through peeling paint on a window. *Boy/Miss Girl* succeeds in navigating this tricky terrain because McClure's stunning direction takes the audience and the characters along the same journeys of pain, risk, and loss. The production buys into Mensch's and McClure's collective vision and executes it almost flawlessly. Such a complex effort probably wouldn't succeed on such a high level without full collaboration from all aspects of the production.

Catherine Gowl is a revelation as Miss Girl. She loads the piece onto her back and navigates it through challenging terrain. She embodies the 12-year-old girl spirit who lives inside a woman, no matter what her age is, and the life journeys that she takes (and takes the audience on). She perfectly captures the inner soul of a person who falls in love and is left behind by her significant other and needs to sift through the pieces. She takes the character of Miss Girl through the innocence of adolescence, and grows into a more experienced young woman who is fragile but strong, vulnerable but resilient.

Other standout performances come from Dave Greenfield (Boy) & Tyler Hollinger (Venture Capitalist), but the ensemble should be commended, because this is truly a wonderful team effort from Odyssey. This play deserves an off-Broadway run to showcase the depth of the play, the production itself, and the starmaking performance of Gowl. Discover this gem at Center for Architecture while you still can.

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Written by:
Carly Mensch

Directed by:
Marina McClure

Presented by:
Odyssey Productions
at the New York
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