

OPHELIA, a new musical at the Wings Theater, 154 Christopher Street in the Village, has exceptionally strong music and lyrics, the former by Jeffrey Weissman, the later by Antonia Tancredi. And they are presented by a cast of nine, all with strong voices, unusually good for an OOB production, backed by an orchestra of six, especially talented under the direction of Jan Rosenberg.

Thus this portion of the production, under the direction of Nancy Hancock is most impressive and such voices as those of Lynette Knapp as Ophelia, Chan Harris as Hamlet, Cherilyn Bacon as Gertrude and John Dewar as Claudius point up this excellence of the music and lyrics and thus serve as an added plus.

The book is another matter. I attended OPHELIA with a former journalistic colleague who has had plays performed OOB and constantly teaches college writing. She has never taught HAMLET of W. Shakespeare and did not object to the changes in the plot and characters except to say she found the Ophelia in this version a little too modern to fit in with the rest. We both found the writing admirable.

A former college English teacher, I brought too much baggage from the Shakespeare tragedy to be entirely at ease with certain aspects of this treatment. I am a true believer in the Freudian interpretation of the character of Prince Hamlet and so was jarred by his having impregnated Ophelia. Further, in the original Polonius is a pompous, sententious windbag, while here he is strong, if not very forceful.

Finally, the personality of Ophelia is more post-Lib 2000 AD than late Medieval or early Renaissance, so her suicide seems off.

But keep an eye peeled for those names: you will surely hear from Jeffrey Weissman and Antonia Tancredi again, and so you should. They are genuine talents.

By Stewart Benedict

Michael's Thing  
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