

FRONT ROW CENTER

By Michael Warren

Tribute

By Bernard Slade

Directed by Roseann Wilshire



Tribute is a strange play, a mixture of comedy, sentimentality and pathos. As a result, the audience is kept off balance, unsure whether to laugh or cry. It is much to the credit of Roseann Wilshire and a talented cast that we manage to believe in the characters and their mixed-up emotions.

Don Rausch plays “Scottie Templeton” – a loveable rogue who has lived a happily irresponsible life –with great skill and stage presence. I didn’t always catch the one-liners when he dropped his voice or turned away from the audience, but he was always totally believable as Scottie the joker. For him, life is one long party. His son “Jud” doesn’t like his father very much – the play

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revolves around the difficult relationship between Jud and his Dad. Kevin O’Byrne handles the role of Jud very well, with repressed emotions bursting out from time to time into entirely understandable rage. Meanwhile, Betty Lloyd Robinson is happily sympathetic as “Maggie Stratton,” Scottie’s ex-wife and Jud’s mother.

It turns out that Scottie is suffering from leukemia, and is forced to contemplate his own mortality. But, hey, life is a party and Scottie keeps up the one-liners. He’d like to reconcile with Jud, but neither of them quite knows how to do it. Phyllis Silverman plays Scottie’s doctor “Gladys Petrelli” who makes personal house-calls (can you believe it?) and is mostly the bearer of unwelcome news. And Don Chaloner is personable as “Lou Daniels” – Scottie’s best friend and landlord who acts as a sort of Master of Ceremonies for the tribute that they all organize for Scottie who (thank goodness!) agrees to the chemotherapy treatments that may save his life. There are two girl-friends in the play. It seems that they were hookers or professional escorts whom Scottie has befriended. Collette Clavadetscher is a newcomer to the LLT stage and performs creditably as “Sally Haines” as she tries to help Jud like his father. And Beryel Dorscht (“Hilary”) has a very funny scene as she pretends to be a nurse, and goes beyond the call of duty for a confused Scottie.

The set was interesting and cleverly constructed with various levels to provide height and contrast.

Congratulations to the set designers Alex Pinkerton and Tony Wilshere. Roseann Wilshere directed this difficult play with considerable subtlety and drew out the best from her cast. I wondered why Scottie didn’t seem at all sick or even slow down after chemotherapy, but perhaps that would have been out of character. Good work by all concerned! Next up is the musical *The Pajama Game* by Richard Adler and Jerry Ross – many of us will remember its popular songs. *The Pajama Game* opens on February 26, and will still be running when you read this review at the beginning of March.