

TA's The Diary of Anne Frank: A Review

Continuing this season's theme of The Mighty Heroine, Theatre Aurora's latest play is 'The Diary of Anne Frank'.

As this true story begins, Otto Frank is the lone survivor from three Jewish families who hid together from the Nazis during the Second World War. Following the war, he returns to the building in Amsterdam where the families were sheltered, and is stunned to be given a diary written by his then-teenage daughter during their time in hiding.

The play tells the story of the eight people during their almost two years spent in their confined attic space as seen and through the eyes of Anne.

Anne was a very intelligent and observant young lady and the series of vignettes based on her diary entries give a fascinating view of the various relationships and emotions as the time confined in their relatively small hiding place progresses.

In the large cast, Riley Therese is a standout as Anne, giving her an optimistic and inquisitive outlook as her character matures during a challenging and stressful time.

Jamie Sherman also excels as Anne's father Otto, showing raw emotion when realizing he's the only survivor of his family, and strength and compassion as the patriarch somehow manages to keep all of the differing personalities from getting on each other's nerves during their confinement.

The other members of the families are played by Bailey Ward (Margot Frank), Finnie Jesson (Edith Frank), Jaime Oren (Mrs. Van Daan), Aaron Sidenberg (Mr. Van Daan), Brady Trussler (Peter Van Daan), and Sean C. Dwyer (Mr. Dussel). All do an excellent job of portraying their characters' differing personalities, hopes and fears as they all become increasingly on edge in such close quarters as potential discovery by the Nazis increases over the many months in hiding.

David Haddad and Lia Baird are strong performers as the brave and sympathetic friends Mr. Kraler and Miep Gies, who keep the families' hideout a secret, and provide them with food, other essentials, and news.

The set provides a good feel for the claustrophobia of the space, which is further strengthened by most cast members being visible on stage, even when they are not an active part of the scene.

With this production, Theatre Aurora has somehow once again excelled itself with a strong story, terrific cast, and powerful performances. It is well worth seeing.

Evening performances of 'The Diary of Anne Frank' continue at Theatre Aurora, 150 Henderson Drive, March 2, 3, 4, 9, 10 and 11, with a matinee on March 5. Tickets are available through the box office at 905-727-3669.

By Scott Johnston