

Theatre Aurora presents Mother of the Maid: A Review

The theme of Theatre Aurora's 2022-23 season is 'the mighty heroine?', and kicking it off is the appropriately titled 'Mother of the Maid?.'

Parents may think they have a tough time dealing with their children these days, but we find it wasn't any easier in the 15th century.

In this story by Jane Anderson, God-fearing Isabelle navigates the challenges of raising a daughter, who not only audaciously wears men's clothing, but communes with saints, and leads the French army into battle.

If you haven't guessed, the daughter in question is better known to us as Joan of Arc.

While there have been a number of adaptations of the story of Joan of Arc, they are usually from her perspective. It's interesting to see it told through the eyes of her mother, and realize there are two mighty heroines in this faithfully adapted tale.

As suggested by the title, the key figure here is mother Isabelle.

As the story unfolds we see her run a gamut of emotions and experiences, including disbelief, amazement, faith, love, loyalty and throughout, great strength.

Janny Hogen Esch does an excellent job portraying this amazing woman, and is on stage for every scene, even doing some narration.

Arin Hincer depicts Joan as a young woman with complete faith and self-confidence.

As father Jacques, Peter Shipston portrays a man who is also supremely self-confident, but also a bit out of his depth at times as he deals with the unusual path his daughter's life has taken.

Pierre, played by Tim Gernstein, balances supporting his sister, trying to meet the high standards set by his father, and taking advantage of the privileges that come from being associated with his sister's newfound status.

The cast is rounded out by David Haddad as Father Gilbert, Yerark Perret as Chamberlain, Sabine Schleese as Lady of the Court, Sydney Schultz as Monique, Ella Clowater as the Scribe and Ben Govis as the Guard.

The story follows Joan's rise and fall fairly closely to true events. Isabelle's role during her daughter's life and beyond makes for an interesting story.

Fortunately, the vocabulary and phrases in the dialogue are all contemporary, which may seem a bit odd at times coming from characters from the 1400s, but does make it easier to follow than some Shakespeare plays.

The set, props and lighting are all very basic, which is all that is needed, and helps to focus attention on the players.

Overall, 'Mother of the Maid?' has a terrific cast and provides a unique look at two historical mighty heroines. It is an excellent and very enjoyable start to Theatre Aurora's latest season.

Evening performances of 'Mother of the Maid?' continue at Theatre Aurora, 150 Henderson Drive, October 20, 21, 22, 27, 28 and 29 with a matinee on October 23. Tickets are available through the box office at 905-727-3669.

By Scott Johnston