

Theatre Aurora's 'Never Swim Alone' and 'This is a Play'

A Review by Scott Johnston

Theatre Aurora gives us two Daniel MacIvor plays for the price of one with 'Never Swim Alone' and 'This is a Play', now playing. 'Never Swim Alone' centres on frenemies Frank and Bill, two businessmen who are locked in a long-standing battle of one-upmanship. This is explored in a series of 13 formal rounds of increasingly intense dialogues, adjudicated by a mysterious woman referee. The winner of each round is allowed time to further insult his competitor.

As the unusual relationship is explored, many questions will be answered: Does this competition between two Type A personalities stem from an actual event? How is the woman involved? Does one of the men have a handgun in his briefcase as is suggested early on? What does swimming have to do with two men in suits? And will anyone come out on top?

After intermission, 'This is a Play' follows three less than stellar actors as they struggle through performing a poorly written play. Most of the dialog consists of inner monologs where the actors amusingly verbalize to themselves why they are performing the way they are, the issues they have with the set and direction, and what they think of their fellow actors.

Tim O'Connell as Frank and Jason Silzer as Bill have excellent pacing in the first play as much of their dialog is performed simultaneously. They, along with Moira-Kelly Steeves as the Referee, ably handle the edgier subject matter.

In the second play, Joey Ferguson as the male actor, Kirsty Campbell as the older actress, and Ms Steeves performing again, this time as the younger actress, all have fun with their lighter-hearted material, and obviously relish the opportunity to portray really bad acting.

The minimal set and excellent use of lighting helps in both plays to focus attention on the actors and dialog.

This is just what you want for the type of evening where the more you pay attention to the stories, the more you will get out of them. Evening performances of 'Never Swim Alone' and 'This is a Play' continue at Theatre Aurora, 150 Henderson Drive, October 25, 26, and 27, and November 1, 2 and 3, with a matinee October 28. Details and tickets are available through the box office at 905-727-3669.