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## Somewhere Fun

by Winnie McCroy

EDGE Editor

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Kate Mulgrew and Kathleen Chalfant (Source: Carol Rosegg)

If a play happens and no one is around to hear it, did it really fail? In the cast of Jenny Schwartz's "Somewhere Fun" currently playing at the Vineyard Theatre, even that question is an enigma.

Schwartz has assembled a stellar cast of players for this performance, all of who give the work the best they've got. But in a play with nearly no forward action, the esoteric concepts seem to come before the act of entertaining the audience, and not even the players can pull it out of its rut.

Ostensibly, "Somewhere Fun" is a play about a reunion of sorts between two uptown New Yorkers Rosemary Rappaport (Kate Mulgrew) and Evelyn

Armstrong (Kathleen Chalfant). Racing to beat an approaching storm, the women run into each other, and recall that they used to take their children to Central Park together, nigh on 30 years ago.

Or, at least, this is what Rappaport remembers, as she reminisces about the woman's perfect daughter Beatrice to her luncheon companion, Cecelia (Mary Shultz). It all comes back to Chalfant later, as she returns from her weekly manicure accompanied by her housekeeper Lolita (Maria Elena Ramirez).

Both Mulgrew and Chalfant positively shine in this production, giving it the benefit of their years of performing. Neither misses a mark, and both are lovely to look upon, blessed to be aging gracefully (how in the world has Mulgrew managed to hang on to those amazing gams and that fiery mane of red hair?)

Even the supporting characters are strong, the children included (although an audience member seated behind me sighed loudly in exasperation every time they took the stage to deliver another go-nowhere show-and-tell monologue).

Much of the weight of the play is consumed with the ideas of what people remember, and what actually happened. Characters talk without listening, interject wild non-sequiturs to get their own news out, and are consumed with technology -- either its acquisition or ignorance about it.

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There is much over-talking in the course of the two-hour, 15-minute show, and characters project their own narratives onto others. For example, Evelyn is dying of anal cancer, but Rosemary wishes it into a sprained ankle. Later, Evelyn decides that she has heard Rosemary now lives in Greenwich, CT, and has all but invited herself for a visit. And put-upon Lolita is

imagined by her boss as living in a squalid tenement, surrounded by kids. Evelyn's dying wish is to see where Lolita lives, which ends up being a charming brick house in Queens, surrounded by family.

The women's lives are complicated by the fact that their families are disjointed. Rosemary's husband has left her for "a twit, a twat and a twink," in that order, and her son Benjamin (Greg Keller) no longer speaks to her. Evelyn's husband "T" is absorbed in peccadilloes and his iPhone golf game. Their daughter Beatrice had her face ripped off by their family dog years ago, and has ceased to exist for Evelyn, even when the girl is sitting in the same room. Evelyn's primary source of dialogue happens between herself and "Fifi," as she has named Lolita's unborn fetus.

Schwartz also tackles class issues via Rosemary. This seemingly well-to-do doyenne still suffers resentment that her old friend Evelyn has done so much better, at one point saying, "I hope her stupid summer home slides into the sea, art collection and all!" But Schwartz does the character no credit by making this real-estate broker completely ignorant of the existence of the Internet. It's simply not credible.



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Some comic relief comes in the form of Rosemary's friend Cecelia's obsession with her new iPhone, but this too primarily serves the purpose of illustrating the lack of communication in our digital age. As Cecelia runs through her apps, she constantly searches for her "fiancé" Ned, whom she has never met, and whose online avatar constantly changes.

As a police officer, nurse and several other characters, Brooke Bloom brings a no-nonsense, self-deprecating vein of comedy to the proceedings, but she too is concerned with getting Benjamin to sign off on the puddle of goo his mother has become.

Much of the dialogue is comprised of sing-song platitudes and lines from old movies, including film noir and "The Wizard of Oz" and "A Streetcar Named Desire." This endless wordplay can be exasperating at times, heavy-handedly returning to the idea that communication today revolves around pat responses people exchange as a substitute for listening. Once you realize that the play isn't going anywhere, you can sit back and enjoy the ride, such as it is.

Still, no one loves to be lectured, despite the truth in the Schwartz's message that our society is consumed with technology, to the detriment of real communication. In the end, "Somewhere Fun" would be a much more fulfilling play to watch if it went somewhere fun, rather than in constant concentric circles.



"Somewhere Fun" runs through June 23 at the Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15 St. For information or tickets, visit <http://www.vineyardtheatre.org/tickets/now-on-sale/>

Winnie McCroy is the Women on the EDGE Editor, HIV/Health Editor, and Assistant Entertainment Editor for EDGE Media Network, handling all women's news, HIV health stories and theater reviews throughout the U.S. She has contributed to other publications, including The Village Voice, Gay City News, Chelsea Now and The Advocate, and lives in Brooklyn, New York, where she writes about local restaurants in her food blog, <http://brooklyniscookin.blogspot.com/>

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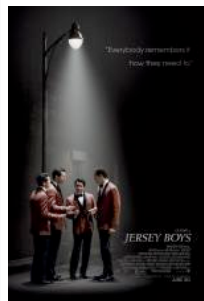
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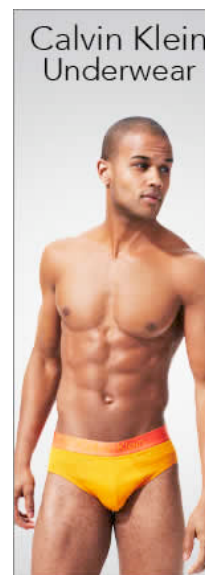


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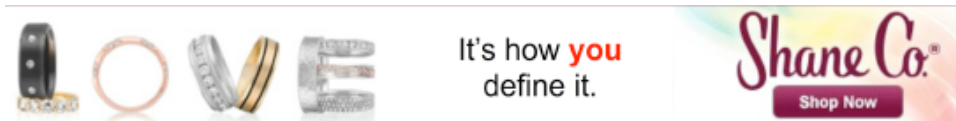
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