



Review: Progress

Description

Waiting For the Glen Site

By Byron Toben

In Sam Beckett's landmark play, "Waiting For Godot", the two listless clowns Vladimir and Estragon, wait in a bleak landscape for Mr. Godot, who never appears.

In Alyson Grant's latest play Progress, two activist clowns wait in a near deserted hospital (Montréal's Royal Vic) for the opening of the new progressive Glen Site. They are designated as ONE (commandingly played by Peter Farbridge) and TWO (amusingly played by Daniel Brochu, with lots of physical theatre).

The both are so numbered as they are the lingering ghosts of the first two patients to die at that the Royal Vic, opened in 1893 as a sign of progress in medicine, the same year as the opening of the electric car system as a sign of progress in transportation. ONE had fallen under a streetcar and TWO, an Irish immigrant, a victim of a smallpox resurgence.

The last patient left, lingering between life and death, is Sarah, a philosophy prof who committed suicide (K.C. Coombs). Ms. Coombs masters her mood of bemused bewilderment wonderfully well as she still strives to die despite the ghost vaudevillians' attempts to save her from being the last patient to die at the Old (Royal) Vic.

Two of the best actors in town play multiple character roles from Sarah's past, a further tribute to director Guy Spring's casting skills. They are Jennifer Morehouse and, fresh from "Kafka's Ape" at the Edinburgh Fringe, Howard Rosenstein.

Between all the flashbacks and pratfalls are discussions on the meaning of life, predestination and whether God exists. None of this serious stuff is lecturing or hectoring, but flows naturally from the plot twists.

Infinithatre's setting this performance in the now abandoned Employee and Nurses Lounge of the RVH is inspired. Highly recommended.



Progress continues at Pavilion H, Entrance 3 extended to November 1.
Tickets: \$25 general; \$20 student/senior (60 +) (taxes not included).
Information at 514 987-1774 ext. 104 or box-office@infiniteatre.com
infiniteatre.com/progress

Images: Brian Morel (1-3) and Thomas Ledwell (4)

Byron Toben is the immediate past-president of the Montreal Press Club.

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