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A Man of MUCH Importance “A Man of No Importance”

Presented by The Good People Theatre Company

Reviewed by Dawn Garcia

[Hollywood Fringe](#) | [Lillian Theatre](#) | 1076 Lillian Way | Los Angeles CA

Tickets \$20 Gen Admission | \$15 Fringe Participants

In a time where claiming your identity is more essential than ever, accepting who you are in spite of everything, loving yourself - it's a message all too necessary. The play, "[A Man of No Importance](#)" can't be summed up quickly. When reading an intimate interview with Director, [Janet Miller](#), it really lends to understanding the "why" behind this being among the first performances put together by [The Good People Theatre Company](#). First of all, it isn't the standard arrogant, overly zealous, "we're so great" kind of theatre company. No, they are a theatre company that believes that actors can be stagehands, and wardrobe, and makeup, and everything else required of them in order to get them ready to be on stage and be an organic part of the process. It's how theatre used to be. Egos had no place and while there will always be that "one" diva of the bunch, the connectedness between theatre actors is unlike any I've seen in any other medium. Actors asked to meet, usually after their "day jobs", recite lines night after night, rehearse, master the actual production behind the performance, and then when Opening Night comes, get on that stage and become the character. And when it works, it's magic.

So as a huge fan of [Oscar Wilde](#) and [Ireland](#) (had planned on moving there in the year 2000) and the persistence of Marketing Director, Kimberly Fox, it was a no-brainer to attend "[A Man of No Importance](#)". I had broken my ankle the night before so I was hobbling in on crutches, greeted by the incredibly kind Kimberly, and realized we were just barely on time. Me and my best friend make our way in to meet my Assistant, [Alexis](#) and her brother, Danny (both contributing columnists in the [Magazine](#)) who had arrived earlier, and took our seats. Four musicians situation in the far corner of the stage. The Irish music begins on cue, the theatre in its silence drowns out the solitude and soon, the cast appears. We meet a man in his 40s named [Alfie](#) speaking to his father (an ACTUAL man of the church) and they talk about the closing of his theatre - referred to as some silly whim. Alfie's dream is slipping away when all he ever wanted to do was create plays and musicals that would make people feel good for a few hours. Soon, cast members appear one by one singing the opening number, "[A Man of No Importance](#)". While I could go through every single number, I think what's important about this particular musical is that every song lends to the emotion often kept inside. Every song has meaning and while some are more impacting than others, you find yourself, about ten minutes in, engaged.

I'll admit that I was swept away by the music but when I started to truly understand what was happening in the story, when Alfie clearly shows he is in love with Robby, things begin to really fall into place. With a bizarre but dutiful relationship between Alfie and his sister, Lily, the protector, anchor, and opinionated powerhouse; the friendship between Alfie and Robby that is seemingly innocent and true; the importance of the theatre to every character involved; societal persecution; the unfortunate backdrop of conservatism rearing it's head to take the freedom and swell of joy right out of it - this was a play/musical that leaves you full of thought, a bit of sadness, and a reason to feel your voice needs to sound. It's message is apropos and much to it's credit is a rather appropriate ode to [Oscar Wilde](#) himself.

The live music keeps your toes tapping and the quintessential power behind this story takes hold of you. The story begs everyone to be themselves and not feel they have to miss out on love or fulfilling dreams simply because some don't understand. In a time where seeing one another as part of one unified species rather than aliens is imperative to our survival, **A Man of No Importance** sounded clearly and lovingly. This play touches on self awareness, love for one another, open mindedness, patience, inspiration, second chances, and not living in the shadows.

Notable performances for me were by **Dominic McChesney** as Alfie Byrne, **Shirley Hatton** as Lily Byrne, **David Gilchrist** as Carney/Oscar Wilde, and **Audrey Curd** as Adele Rice. Dominic's portrayal of Alfie was one of understated suffering and unending optimism; Shirley made you both cringe and feel that beauty of protective love and the deep longing of sacrificing too much; David had the most conflicting roles to be sure to go from the ridiculing puritan to the overtly risque Oscar Wile and he does so with a beautiful ease; and Audrey's sweetness and openness allows her secrets and self doubt to unveil rather remarkably. There was an honesty in their performances and a conviction when they opened up their world's and sang that really gripped me. Janet Miller deserves a lot of credit as well for bringing that subtle message to the forefront encouraging all of us to love ourselves and each other as we are.

Thanks to Kimberly for being so diligent and inviting me out to witness something that I am certain is only the beginning of **GPTC**.

Now for a quick read on Alexis' take:

To be honest, I am not much of a musical fan. To me, more often than not, the random interjection of song and dance can come off contrived, placing melody and shuffle-steps seemingly arbitrarily into a storyline. There are exceptions, however. Shows like "**Chicago**" earn their tunes simply because it makes sense- a story about **cabaret**-style performers warrants some cabaret-like activities. Or on the opposite end, "**Spring Awakening**", because the music is meant to serve as a conduit of their thoughts, expressing the unspoken love, anger, and frustration of the situation. "**A Man of No Importance**" is one such musical that earns the right for music and movement.

We watched the **Good People Theater Company's** production at **Elephant Stage's Lillian Theater** with little prior knowledge about the play, only that it had something to do with **Oscar Wilde, Dublin** in the 1960s, and "you just have to love who you love". With very minimal sets, the cast did a beautiful job of conveying their surroundings, all sporting commendable Irish accents, which certainly adds a layer of difficulty to performing the songs. The musical numbers help to express the inner desires, worries, and dreams of the characters, drawing the audience in to make a connection. **Dominic Mcchesney**, who plays the lead, "Alfie Byrne," brings a genuine and believable quality to his character, but it was **Shirley Hatton**, who plays his sister Lilly Byrne that stood out the most to me. Her commitment to her character was as humorous as it was heartfelt. Overall, the production was a good balance of humor and drama, coupled with an unpredictable ending that lingers in your mind long after.

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