



John Barrymore

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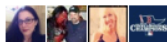
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4 hours ago

Okay, so last night I went to see the FIFTH production of William Luce's play, "Barrymore," a one man show (albeit with one offstage character, Frank the prompter) about my grandfather. I never saw the film that Christopher Plummer starred in, but I did see Plummer's production early on in San Francisco before he took it to Broadway and later did the film. I saw a production in Santa Maria, CA, one in Los Angeles, and even acted in one in Loomis, CA where I played the offstage prompter, Frank. I wasn't a big fan of the script as these one man shows can often turn into tedious history lessons, most of them based on anecdotes which are either apocryphal or outright fiction. So it was with great trepidation I went to the Greenway Court theater last night expecting to suffer through yet another production of what I thought to be a mediocre script at best.

I was completely blown away by Gordon Goodman's performance in the play as directed by Janet Miller. For the first time I saw an actor nail it, totally. Combined with Miller's direction, Goodman's performance for the first time revealed what the playwright had to say about the man.

I've always agreed with my grandfather that acting isn't really an art; he called it a junk-pile of the arts, I've always considered it more of a craft or skilled trade, with the firm belief that the writer is the artist, and the actor is part of the team dedicated to realizing the author's vision. Well it's a tough assignment when the character you're called upon to play is real person, especially a real person who has left a substantial film record, even tougher yet when it's essentially a one man show. Goodman did it, he nailed it. My hat is off to him and his director Miller, and I have a new respect for Luce's work.

The show I saw was a preview. Tonight, Saturday is opening night and already sold out. I have no idea how long this play is running, but if anyone wants to see a production of "Barrymore," this is the one to see.

I had to take off right after the play ended (I had originally intended to sneak away halfway through the first act but changed my mind before long before that point) so I didn't have a chance to speak to Gordon Goodman, but if he reads this, I salute you, sir.

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