

A MAN OF NO IMPORTANCE at The Lillian

Finale of A Man with the cast
Photo by Shirley Hatton

In 1895, Oscar Wilde was sentenced to two years hard labor at Reading Gaol for unspeakable crimes. Seventy years later we meet , Alfie Byrne (spot on Dominic McChesney), a man in a box. Alfie's a conductor on a Dublin bus. He enlightens his passengers to their delight by reading from the poetry of Oscar Wilde with sincere abandon. It's 1964 in Terrance McNally's **A Man of No Importance**, five years before The Stonewall Riots in New York City. Prejudice against 'poofters' in Dublin, as in most other parts of the world, abounds. Catholic guilt bumps heads with Alfie's love of the Theatre: ART and... the love that 'dare not speak its name.'

Creative Director of Good People Theatre Company, Janet Miller, is in it for the love of theatre. Her initial production beams with the dedication of the cast in the rustic Lillian Theatre that doubles for the community room at Dublin's St. Imelda's Catholic Church. St. Imedelda's is overseen by newcomer to the cast Terrence Evans as Father Kenny. Evans' last minute entry into the established company was a bit iffy at the start, but the play must go on and as it rolled along, this pivotal role became his.

Corey Hirsch's *almost* Irish band keeps the flow consistently through out two acts. The only missing element is the throbbing bottom of the bodhran, the throaty Irish frame drum that is significant in the music of the Emerald Isle. Hirsch and his

professional crew whose names I am unable to find in the program, are consistent and supportive. As a fan of Boys of the Lough and The Clancy Brothers with Tommy Makem, the true spirit of Ireland, is off only by a hair. Score by Stephen Flaherty and lyrics by Lynn Ahrens is filled with energy and the ensemble brings it all to life. For some reason, we have no signature tune that sticks with us to send us humming out the door. Grand moments include the rich tenor of bus driver Robbie Fay (swarthy Keith Barletta) especially with "The Streets of Dublin" and Alfie's self exploration in "Man in the Mirror" (not the Michael Jackson song) that is at once a lament and a seed of inspiration that takes root and later blossoms.

It's a love story in many ways. Alfie's love of Oscar Wilde and his passion for the theatre is primary. His new project will introduce the cast of locals to Salome, a truly passionate piece of Wilde's. His discovery of the very pretty ingénue, Adele Rice (very pretty Audrey Curd), who is new to the bus route is perfect for the role of Salome, even though the more senior Mrs. Grace (Mary Chesterman) would really like to shed the seven veils herself. Underlying is Alfie's personal exploration of love with "Love Who You Love" that brings the story around to him personally.

The ensemble doubles from time to time with stand outs Matt Stevens as Baldy O'Shea singing a melancholy but also happy tune, "The Cuddles Mary Gave."

The ensemble: Marci Richmond Herrera (perky Miss Crowe), Gail Matthus (Mrs. Curtin stops the show when she suggests that Salome might tap dance her veils away), Corky Loupé, Michael P. Wallot, sexy Malina Kalomas, Bret Shefter, Matt Franta, elegant Shirley Anne Hatton (Lily Byrne) and imposing David Gilchrist, all, are a troupe of True Thespians who, within and without the context of the piece act as one.

This impressive initial offering by Good People is a signature for strong productions to come. Professional from first to last, those who love the Irish and know McNally's strong characters will find this one endearing.

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