

STAGE SCENE LA

MARRY ME A LITTLE

If you haven't heard most of the music in Stephen Sondheim's *Marry Me A Little*, it's for good reason. The 1980 song cycle, conceived and developed by Craig Lucas and Norman René, is made up almost entirely of material left on the cutting-room floor.

Fortunately, even cutting-room-floor Sondheim is better than just about anyone else, and with director Janet Miller and stars Jessie Withers and David Laffey making magic on the Lillian Theatre stage, *Marry Me A Little* is likely to prove one of Hollywood Fringe 2015's most popular and acclaimed hits.

Some of *Marry Me A Little*'s songs will be familiar to cast recording listeners, including the title song and "There Won't Be Trumpets," but both were cut from their show's original productions, and though *Company* lovers will recognize some of the lyrics in "Happily Ever After," you'll likely not know the melody. Other songs will be pleasant discoveries.

Withers and Laffey play upstairs-downstairs neighbors whose matching apartments are superimposed one atop the other on a single set. (Scenic designer Robert Schroeder gives us just one bed, with a pillow at each end since he sleeps this way and she sleeps that.) We follow their Saturday night alone ... together.

Both Withers and Laffey sing gloriously whether soloing or in duet. Her "Can That Boy Fff...oxtro" is a sexy hoot and her gender-reversed "Marry Me A Little" a stunner; his "Multitude Of Amys" is simply sublime. Together, they sing an enchanted "Two Fairy Tales," an uber-romantic "So Many People," a delicious "Pour Le Sport," and many more.

Miller's directorial touches are inspired. (Watch how Withers and Laffey each hold one side of the same book, which we know is really two.)

Kathy Gillespie's multiple costume changes and Katherine Barrett's evocative lighting in particular make this Fringe production almost indistinguishable from one in a regular run, and with musical director Corey Hirsch on keyboard, Sondheim's melodies are in impeccable hands. Rebecca Schroeder is stage manager.

If there's one musical not to miss at this year's Hollywood Fringe, it's likely to be *Marry Me A Little*. I liked it more than a little. I liked it a lot.

–Steven Stanley
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