



News ▼ TimeOut ▼ LifeStyle ▼ Local News ▼ Market Place ▼

Intriguingly dark, complex 'Virginia Woolf' plays well at the Brumder Mansion

By JULIE McHALE - TimeOut Theater Critic

October 24, 2019



From left, Matt Specht (Nick), Cara Johnston (Honey), Bryant Mason (George), and Amy Hansmann (Martha) in Milwaukee Entertainment Group's production of "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?"

Photo by Tom Carr

MILWAUKEE - In the 1950s and '60s, our TV palettes often featured shows that glorified marriage and family life.

Edward Albee, always a controversial playwright, came along and started stripping off stereotypical veneers and disregarding societal proprieties, uncovering the darker side of humanity. One of his biggest successes was "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?," a look at marriage through the lens of a cynic. Albee also took some swipes at academia, and characterized it as a bed of wife-swapping and ruthless competitiveness.

Produced by the Milwaukee Entertainment Group, the two men in this story - George and Nick - both married for a perceived advantage.

The scene opens with Martha yelling at George as they return from a faculty party, where they welcomed new hires. One could see that they had already been drinking heavily and that their relationship was combative. To add to their already-contentious moods, Martha announces that she has invited Nick and Honey to drop by after the party. It is already 2 a.m. George is not happy.

During the next three hours, aided by the obvious loss of inhibitions often induced by the power of alcohol, we get some insights into these four characters and their marriages. Neither was pretty.

The night is explosive, intense. One feels drained by the time the show ends, even though it certainly holds one's attention throughout.

Amy Hansmann as Martha was coarse and crass and pitiful; Bryant Mason as George with his powerful bluster was trying hard to hold his own; Matt Specht as Nick, who looked like the all-American boy, proved to be much more complex than his appearance revealed, and Cara Johnston as sweet, little Honey was both naive and cunning, maddeningly simplistic, but charmingly childlike. A fascinating foursome.

If you can handle this dark drama and look behind closed doors to see the sometimes unnerving truth, don't miss this impressive showing of an outstanding classic.

“Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf”

The play runs through Nov. 2 at the Brumder Mansion , 3046 W. Wisconsin Ave. , Milwaukee . Call 414-388-9104 or visit www.MilwaukeeEntertainmentGroup.com.