

## Three Shorts in a Mansion

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Late this month, **The Milwaukee Entertainment Company** hosts an evening of three one acts by seasoned local actor/director/playwright **Bill Jackson**. Once again, it's refreshing to see live theatre in an indoor setting after lockdown. The three shorts are presented with a single intermission. Brief dramatic comedies about truth and identity open and close a program also featuring a comedy of a couple of pairs of sisters. It's all very small, intimate and well-executed. One of the first big returns to traditional indoor theatre in Milwaukee turns out to be a casual evening with nine characters. Conversation are had. People learn a bit more about each other. And everyone goes home.

The program opens on a dreamily resonant note courtesy of Bill Jackson, who begins the show directing his own work. *Coffee With Doug* imagines a chance meeting between two strangers who turn out to be more than strangers. **Joe Ferrie** has a ragged, frazzled charisma as a guy who has come to edit some poetry in peace and quiet. **Scott Sorenson** summons a fair amount of earnest curiosity as the guy who ends up distracting him for the course of the drama. It's a pleasant, little dark fantasy that delves into the nature of celebrity in the heyday of the baby boomer...the last era of the enduringly resonant mega-celebrity demigods. It's a short that might be lost to those without some passing familiarity with the rock and roll of the era. Celebrity is a hell of a lot more cheap and disposable in the age of the internet than it was back then. Playwright/actress **Deanne Strasse** makes a fun, little cameo as a waitress at the coffee shop.

The music of The Doors lingers as the scene changes for the second one act: *Nut Ring*. **Becky Cofta** and **Hayley San Filippo** play a couple of sisters slipping into a conversation about sex with a pair of older sisters played by **Kim Emer** and **Leslie Fitzwater**. Open and honest discussion of sex has a tendency to be awkward to begin with, but the one pair of sisters in this case just happens to be mother and aunt to the other pair. Jackson plays an interesting, little chamber symphony of comedy directed by **Raven Dockery**. Everyone has a chance at a slightly different angle on the sex-based comedy conversation. Filippo is sweet. Cofta is sensual. Elmer is earnest. Fitzwater is a little bit of everything. It's a nice, little four-part harmony of ribald comedy.

Russ Bickerstaff

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The program returns after intermission with Nate Press and Ashley Oviedo as fiancées Ash and Cassie in a hilarious play. The characters have only been together for a brief period of time, but when she comes home to accuse him of being immortal. What might seem absurd on the surface gradually delves into greater and greater thematic depth as Jackson explores truth and identity. Press has a brilliantly layered sense of comedy that serves the short well. He’s as good with obvious punchlines as he is with far more subtle and nearly imperceptible shades of humor. Oviedo is crushingly vulnerable and courageous as someone who isn’t afraid to sound crazy to someone she loves in order to get the truth. Director **Robert A. Zimmerman** cleverly sets tone and mood while sharply directing the flow of traffic in a script that could all-too-easily feel overwhelmingly weighty. Oviedo is remarkably magnetic. Press is appealingly restless. It’s a truly enjoyable end to a really, really fun evening of shorts.

*Table For Three: An Evening of One Acts by Bill Jackson* runs through **August 14th** at the **Brumder Mansion** on **3046 W. Wisconsin Avenue**. For ticket reservations and more, visit [Milwaukee Entertainment Company online](#).

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