

DANIEL'S HUSBAND by Michael McKeever

The Fountain Theatre, unless you live in East Hollywood, is a bitch of a drive. Parking is beastly and the lot next door is usually stuffed tighter than your grandmother's bell peppers. Plus, there's no convenient restaurant nearby, where you could park, eat and walk to the show. So why do even the snooty Westsiders cross La Cienega en masse to attend shows at this theatre? Because the Fountain consistently produces excellent plays and the current one, DANIEL'S HUSBAND even raises the standard a notch or two. It's a really beautiful love story between two men. If that puts some of you off, let me assure you that it could flourish easily between a man and a woman. Their emotions and conflicts are universal and their interaction tastefully done.

It takes place in the attractive home designed by Daniel (the tall, slender, likable Bill Brochtrup), a gifted architect and occupied by him and his lover, Mitchell (Tim Cummings), a successful novelist. A dinner party is in progress, the mood is jovial, the quips clever and amusing. Daniel, who is also a gourmet cook, serves his delectable creme brûlée dessert. Present, of course, are Mitchell, a fascinating man fulfilled in both his professional and private life. He is also acerbic, volatile and opinionated but very bright with a certain raw charm. The one sour note in this sweet romance of seven years, is that Daniel wants to get married, have a big party with all the traditional trimmings, followed by a honeymoon – the works. Mitchell, even though they are both in love, will have none of it and doesn't believe in marriage, which results in a battle royale which will have grave consequences later. The other guests are Mitchell's good friend and literary agent, Barry (Ed F. Martin), not the usual despicable agent type whose general Like-O-Meter hovers between lawyers and undertakers. Barry gets teased a lot for his promiscuous penchant for very young men. But that's fortuitous because he has brought along his current toy boy Trip (Jose Fernando) a cheerful, exuberant millennial with a sunny disposition, ideal for his job as a free lance caregiver.

A major damper comes in the form of Daniel's mother, whom he has always detested and blamed for his late, beloved dad's unhappiness and her disparaging dismissal of his talents. Mom, Lydia (Jenny O'Hara, well remembered for her co-starring role in Bakersfield Mist) has announced her week-long uninvited and unwelcome visit. Soon enough, she blows in like a bad breath and immediately makes herself at home, even invites a neighbor for dinner. One of my former co-workers would describe her as a TOB (take-over broad). The play evokes the famous theatrical symbol of two masks. One is smiling, the other sad. The mood darkens when tragedy strikes unexpectedly. If you are not moved by this exquisitely written, superbly directed (by Simon Levy) and excellently performed work by the entire cast, your heart is frozen somewhere up in Antarctica!

The Fountain Theatre, 5060 Fountain Ave. (at Normandie) Los Angeles, 90029. Friday & Monday 8pm, Saturdays 2 & 8pm, Sundays 2pm. No intermission. \$25- student, \$35- senior, regular and Monday's \$40, premium \$45. parking in adjacent lot \$5, (323) 663-1525
www.fountaintheatre.com ends 6/23

REVIEW BY INGRID WILMOT