

CURRENT REVIEWS



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by **TRAVIS MICHAEL HOLDER**

Odyssey Theatre Ensemble

On designer Pete Hickok's basically bare stage evoking a serene city park, two elders (Patty McCormack and the playwright Dan Lauria) meet every day in Lauria's sweet, gentle two-hander *Just Another Day*, now making its Los Angeles debut at the Odyssey after successful runs off-Broadway and at Trinity College in Dublin.

The play quickly evokes a contemporary senior citizen version of Beckett's classic *Waiting for Godot* as the sprightly twosome, on a continuous loop of banter of various degrees in importance, are interrupted by an off-stage "woman in white" who rings a bell when they get too agitated—or too frisky.

They repeatedly try to remember when and how they have known each other and soon the faux-absurdist little dramedy makes it clear—well, relatively clear—they are Alzheimer's patients in the garden of a facility where they are living out their lives. They may have once been comedy writers who worked as a team, they may be a long-married couple, she may have been a poet, he may have been a stand-up comedian.

Under the sharply tuned direction of New York educator and theatre producer extraordinaire Eric Krebs (once artistic director here of Geffen Playhouse in a too quick residency on our coast), Lauria's script is often clever and extremely well written. It is occasionally bittersweet, often quite funny, and at times quite poetic.

The pair, who reflect that they are an "anachronism and no longer needed," often find they link the most when discussing classic films and the great movie iconic stars of the silver screen, many of whom flash by in massive (uncredited) old Hurrell-style photos on the stage's back wall.

At one point, Lauria's character (the roles are only called Man and Woman) brings up the Three Stooges and she wonders how many people in the audience will still even know who they were.

"Shame on them if they don't," the Man bellows in response and my first thought was it was lucky *Just Another Day* debuted at the Odyssey, where the usual average age of most patrons in the audience is about 285—and that includes me. Except for one kid about 16 we saw return to his seat at intermission, my theatre-date friend Rachel Sorsa had to be the only other audience member in attendance at this Sunday matinee not on Metamucil.

There have been many plays, books, films, and even documentaries dealing with Alzheimer's and aging in general. I am personally quite attuned to such material, as I deal with caring for someone with whom I've lived for 56 years as he slowly, painfully disappears right before my eyes on a daily basis.

Because of this, I suspect I have a bit of an Achilles' heel hampering my total objectivity when confronted with memory loss as a subject, which is why, especially because Lauria's writing is slick and accessible and the performances by two such noteworthy seasoned performers are golden, I was dismayed to find myself not at all moved or emotionally engaged in the play.

Still, to see actors such as Lauria (best known as the patient father on *The Wonder Years*) and McCormack (Oscar nominee at age 9 as the evil Rhoda Penmark in *The Bad Seed*) bounce off one another's talents live onstage is a treat and there are plenty of moments to make your attendance worthwhile.

As much as I left the theatre feeling the classily produced *Just Another Day* never quite connected with me personally, the exploration of one major theme will stay with me for a long time to come:

"As long as we create," the Man tells his feisty sparing partner, "we are not lost."

**THROUGH SEPT. 28: Odyssey Theatre, 2055 N. Sepulveda Blvd., West LA.
310.477.2055 or OdysseyTheatre.com**