

#ME THREE, An Alternate Review by Richard J. Griffin*



Me Three: A Guide to New Beginnings at Daydream Theater
(Credit: Richard Griffin)

After having a delicious pre-theater meal at Cafe Cazzata (try the Chicken Bocchino, it's to die for) with my life partner, Troy, we decided to jet over to historic Woonsocket, Rhode Island, to see Lenny Schwartz's newest screwball farce, *#MeThree: A Guide To New Beginnings*. Now, Troy, being German, typically prefers more highbrow theater like *Antigone* and *Natalie Needs A Nightie*, but after a hard week of writing theater reviews, I needed something more frothy and, well, just plain fun!

Lenny, as you may know, is the master of writing bioplays like *The Inside of His Severed Head: The Vic Morrow Story* and *The Man Who Saw Snoopy*, which from what I could gather, was about the life of the father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud. But this time, Lenny paints the stage with nothing but laughs, mistaken identities, pies in the face, and — in the case of the hunky leading man Derek Laurendeau, cross-dressing! Which brings up a very important point about *#MeThree*, that even though the guffaws, we must not laugh at those damned souls who choose to wear women's clothing. This is America after all, and if a man wants to look like a walking abomination to the Lord in a black cocktail dress, then God forbid I should judge.

Where was I? Oh yes. *#MeThree* is a zany romantic comedy where the studly Mr. Laurendeau, who plays Hank, a newspaper writer, has started a fiery love affair with the beautiful and talented Jamie Lyn Bagley, who plays the role of THE WOMAN. In this battle of the sexes, Schwartz lets his young lovers take off the gloves and give themselves a brutal, bloody beating of the heart. For Derek's character, it's a case of the old "Women, you can't live with 'em, you can't ship them off to live in a prison colony!" Laurendeau and Bagley shine like shiny things in their roles, and their sexual tension was almost too uncomfortable for some people in the audience, who fled for the exits never to be seen again before intermission. I, personally, roared with laughter during the eight-minute scene where Jamie Lyn continually kneed Derek in the groin while Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture" played to hysterically funny

effect!

But nothing is fair in love and community theater, so along comes the evil corporate tycoon, Mr. HOLLYWOOD, who was THE WOMAN's former lover when she worked at Electric Boat. Played with evil aplomb by stage veteran Michael Thurber (you'll all remember when he won that Medal of Valor during the war between The Ocean State Theater Company and The Arctic Playhouse in 2009), he comes in during the second act to break up this love affair! Hank wants things between him and THE WOMAN to be ME TOO, but the evil Mr. HOLLYWOOD wants it to be ME THREE! While Mr. Thurber is at his wicked best here, I thought the 30-minute "Tribute to Liberace" interlude he performed was a bit much for my already taxed bladder.

Act Three is mostly taken up with the arrival of the British Pigeon sisters, with both roles played by Sarah Reed, in her 230th play this year in Rhode Island. She brings a wonderful energy to her scenes, and is a sexy foil to the more laid-back Oscar and the always nervous Felix!

I would like to spend an entire paragraph now talking about Derek Laurendeau. Derek is a fine young actor with luscious pillowy lips who I've seen in dozens of plays in New England over the past few years. He truly knows how to command a scene. His performance shines here, and he exudes a raw, almost primal sexuality. With every line he utters with his masculine, deep voice, you'll quiver with delight! I was only disappointed in one aspect of the show, and that is that Mr. Laurendeau never removed his shoes and socks (even though there were many opportunities to do so), while a spotlight lovingly caresses every hill and valley of his feet. I hope future directors will take note of this criminal oversight.

Dan Martin throws a lot of pies around the stage and screams a lot. Personally, I didn't like his use of four-letter words, and it made me profoundly uncomfortable to have to explain to Troy what a "blumpkin" was.

At one point during the show, during Jamie Lyn's show-stopping performance of "Tomorrow Belongs to Me," someone dressed in a Spiderman costume fell from the catwalk and crashed onto the stage floor. This provided the biggest laugh of the night!

Victoria Paradis is delightful doing her one-woman tribute to Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Starlight Express*, which just happens to be Troy's favorite bit of intellectual theater.

Anastasia LaFrance plays Queen Mary the Second, and I didn't understand her at all. But I've never really understood women ... I mean who does?

But what is Lenny Schwartz trying to say with *#MeThree*? What is the message? What is the deeper meaning? Personally, I think Lenny was saying, "Look at me! I'm funny! I'm a funny man making with the slamming doors, and the screaming, and the pies in the face!" Your interpretation may vary, but I highly doubt it. For those of you looking for a night out at the theater — in Woonsocket — you could do a lot worse than *#MeThree*!

Daydream Theater at the RISE Playhouse presents Lenny Schwartz's #Me Three: A Guide to New Beginnings, through April 27. 142 Clinton St, Woonsocket.

**Richard J. Griffin was born in Westerly, Rhode Island in 1955. He currently lives in the good section of Cranston with his life partner Troy Müller. Together they enjoy growing their prize roses, wine tasting and fighting over who will take the dominant role in the bedroom.*

Editor's Note: Richard J. Griffin is affiliated with the #Me Three production and writes in response to an earlier review, which can be seen here: motifri.com/daydream-methree