



New York Theatre WireSM

Theatre Dance Performance Art Music
Alternative and International Theatre

Glenda Frank

YOURS UNFAITHFULLY

“Yours Unfaithfully”

by Miles Malleon and directed by Jonathan Bank.

Produced by the Mint Theatre Company at the Beckett Theatre, 410 W. 42 St., NYC. Dec. 27, 2016 – Feb. 18, 2017. Tues. – Sat. at 7:30; Wed., Sat. Sun. at 2:30. Tickets are \$65 at 212-947-8844, Beckett Theatre box office, and Telecharge.com. More information is available at www.minttheater.org.

by Glenda Frank

Famous for its revivals of “lost” plays, the Mint Theatre Company, now at the Beckett Theatre on Theatre Row, is offering a smart production of the still controversial 1933 play, “Yours Unfaithfully” by Miles Malleon. The extremely likeable Stephen Meredith (Max von Essen) and his elegant wife, Anne (Elisabeth Gray), remain very much in love after eight years of marriage. Alan Kirby (Todd Cerveris), their close friend and a psychiatrist, judges their marriage the best he knows. They are, he tells Anne, functioning at 80%. Many marriage only make 30% Is she reassured? Maybe. At any rate armed with this consolation, she leaves to meet her lover. Her husband is scheduled to return from his Paris tryst the next day.



Max von Essen and Mikaela Izquierdo in YOURS UNFAITHFULLY by Miles Malleon. Photo: Richard Temine.

“Yours Unfaithfully” is the British take on open marriages. Malleon, an actor-playwright who was “no respecter of authority” according to a review in the Manchester Guardian, spices it up with all sorts of complications and metaphors. Stephen and his father, the Rev. Canon Gordon Meredith in a turned collar that we usually associate with priests, live close by, share a passion for cricket and play on the same team. Dad sometimes pops in at the wrong moment and he pontificates. You might guess he’d be comic relief but actor John Hutton plays him with authority and appeal, so we listen to his arguments, which have merit. Jonathan Bank, the Artistic Director of the Mint, has cast well and directed with a sure, light hand. As always at the Mint the costumes (Hunter Kaczorowski) are period wonders with interesting details.

The father-son relationship, of course, is a microcosm of cultural values, which are cleverly presented by every character. The psychiatrist, Anne’s former lover, says the Meredith style would not suit his new marriage. Diana, Stephen’s new lover (Mikaela Izquierdo), worries that the affair might upset Anne, her friend. After reassuring Diana, Anne is dismayed to find herself jealous and angry. Stephen forgoes his romantic trip to Vienna, schedules a weekend in Paris (a hop across the Channel) instead, and volunteers to scrap the plan completely. His only concern is that he might lose his wife.

In the hands of a lesser playwright, “Yours Unfaithfully” might have become a play of ideas, but the production feels like a glimpse into the lives of real people, people you would never suspect harbored these secrets. After a critically successful first novel, Stephen suffered years of writer’s block, so he and Anne founded a (successful) school to support the family. In Paris he devised the plot for a new novel. The charm and ordinariness of the Merediths are a challenge itself to convention. Their responsibility to their children and each other raises questions that echo beyond the play – questions about their lifestyle, about marriage, and about the choices we make for ourselves and our judgment of others. It’s lovely that the Mint has found Malleon -- and brought us such an unusual valentine.

