

THEATRE

Play is demanding, provocative

Review by Deborah S. McGee

Extremities

Take a woman you love to *Extremities*. Its airing of our society's confusion over rape will improve her mental health. Its action will serve as a reminder for her to be more cautious in this crazy world. At the same time, Oregon Repertory Theater presents top-quality drama based on a demanding, provocative play.

Extremities wastes no time getting down to the attacker/victim encounter. It's offensive. It might make you want to stomp out of the theater. ORT shows great class, though, in its rendition of the scene. Having Marjorie take charge of the situation is an historic moment for women characters as depicted in the arts. What follows Marjorie's table turning, though, is deeply disturbing. No matter what expectations you carry into the theater, this play will bother you. *Extremities* is *Crime and Punishment* revisited Eugene style.

Extremities is an acting challenge for the rapist and his target, and Andrew DeRycke and Cara Siler Dubadat meet it. DeRycke could use more coaching on his accent, but otherwise carries well his part as Eddie. He truly does appear to suffer bodily harm, and being deprived of free movement through all but the first part of the play must put tremendous strain on his body. How, too, could anyone take all the bad vibes directed his way? DeRycke is impressive.

Dubadat uses to advantage the leggy grace of her dancing background. She must play a virginal type also able to appear at times

a tease, as well as the embodiment of irrational evil. Dubadat's soliloquy at the end of Act I drew the audience right into her state, a connection we never lost in spite of the jibes of other characters. The play's resolution worked as catharsis for all who lived Marjorie's experience momentarily Saturday night.

D. Roberts plays Marjorie's roommate Terry, who has a story of her own to tell. Those were real tears—this woman has much talent. Ann C. Hargraves, who plays the other roommate, could relax her vocal chords more, but comes across believably in her mindless professionalism. Audience reaction to some of her lines provided the play's only humor, a necessary release in an intense drama.

Ron Royer's musical direction was most apparent in the repeated acoustical "theme" melody, a sensuous rhythm of paired string instruments with a noise as of clapping hands. Coming at play's beginning, occasionally throughout, and at the end, it gave an underlying animalistic mood to a play which deals with the basest of human emotions. Other production note: outstanding make-up job, the details of which would, if revealed, spoil your viewing of the play.

What bothered me was that I wanted the woman to be stronger. When Marjorie first encounters the stranger in her house, I was ashamed of her cowering, and wanted her to have the strength of mind to get rid of him before he could overcome her. Her early cowardice stretches the imagination

a bit too much to make believable her later demented violence.

I also wanted Marjorie's roommates to be more of a comfort to her. Why did they automatically believe "the animal" and close their minds to their housemate's story? This did not seem real, although it remains a truism that women listen more closely to males and authorities than to each other. Another annoyance was it seemed Eddie could have struggled more once he was "behind bars." It would have added even more delicious tension.

Aside from these points, which mainly are problems with William Mastrosimone's script, ORT's new directions via Joseph Gilg are wise and exciting. *Extremities* is the first of four productions planned this year. ORT's had its struggles like any other arts organization in the '80s. Remarkably, the juice is still there. Eugene is spoiled with the constant fine theater available for minimal energy output.

True to ORT's much publicized outreach/community efforts, Rape Crisis Network and Men Against Rape members were available at information tables in the immediate lobby. When I questioned the wisdom of a woman fighting back, the MAR representative told me that in 70 to 80 percent of the rapes in Lane County, no weapon is involved.

Arts-plus-politics seems the ticket here. Far more inviting than the furor of two summers ago over Mainstage's *The Fantastiks*. Nice to see the cooperation among arts and political groups for attention of the same segment of the population.

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