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# Just entertainment

## Love in war

As the doomed lovers, Don Alder and Marilyn Stacey provide a solid core to *Never in My Lifetime*

B Y G L E N Y O R K

The opening of a production at The New Rose Theatre is a startling departure for Portland's theater scene. After a holiday season brimming with boys from *Never-never Land* and *Scrooges* in several shapes and sizes, the new production arrives like a sharp slap in the face.

## Theatre

*Never In My Lifetime* is meant to be intense and sobering. In a large sense, the play deals with human beings grappling with hatred, rage, death, and military combat. Playwright Shirley Gee offers her audience little comfort or relief as she deals vividly and realistically with her themes.

In its more immediate sense, the play involves six people trapped in the violence and tension of Northern Ireland. Two of them discover immense joy and peace with each other but are ultimately shattered by the reality that their relationship is impossible. She is Irish and he is a British enlisted man in a place and time where "squaddies" and "paddies" are engaged in a death struggle.

As doomed lovers, Don Alder and Marilyn Stacey provide a solid core to the production. Their relationship must be genuine if their ultimate tragedy is to deliver its full impact and they succeed admirably.

Together, Alder and Stacey delicately and warmly detail their characters' growing relationship. Their second act scenes of passion are also rich and real.

Individually, Stacey gives a full-bodied portrayal of a girl drawn in by love. The girl's emotional attraction, the strong doubts she feels, and the bit of excitement she finds in the resulting danger are all artfully blended by Stacey. Also believable is the anguish she

exhibits when she realizes her dilemma. Alder matches her nicely in juggling a variety of diverse emotions.

Providing a sounding-board for Alder is Charlie, played by David Beetham-Gomes. Although they are military buddies, Charlie also tends to fill a rather crude father role for the young man. Beetham-Gomes delivers a forceful, though often shallow, characterization.

Stacey finds support, as well as harsh words of warning, from Maire, played by Robin Woolman. Maire is filled with rage and frequently seems to be at the breaking point. Woolman is terrific, making Maire's fury explosive and believable. Even more impressive is Woolman's ability to make Maire's blind hatred understandable.

Orbiting around the lovers are Lisa Barck as Charlie's wife and Merril Lynn Taylor as the girl's mother. Most of their observations are presented through monologues which are largely intended to shape the mood of the play with their descriptions of gruesome violence. Unfortunately, the device becomes obvious through over-use. Furthermore, Barck and Taylor are unable to find enough levels to disguise the repetitiveness.

Much of the evening's success can be credited to Linda Williams Janke's fluid direction. Her pacing and appropriate scaling of the production heighten the tension of the show. Janke's shaping of the show is complemented by Jim Gilsdorf's flowing lighting design.

As a general note, the actors' heavy accents are sometimes an impediment to the listener. A few minutes spent reviewing the glossary in the program can help ease this difficulty.

*Never In My Lifetime* is not an easy show to watch. Nor is it easy to forget. It is a harsh portrayal of hatred and its tragic effects. This is a theme that cannot be ignored. No one can really stay in *Never-never Land* forever.

The production continues Wednesdays through Saturdays until February 18. Ticket information may be obtained by calling 222-2487.

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## "Girl Friday" professional and entertaining

*Girl Friday* is a review of songs, skits, and sketches of outrageous lesbian and gay material. The trio of performers — Lea De Laria, Kelley Edwards, and Richard Weinstock — are enormously talented and hugely entertaining.

Lea, best known as a standup comic (she had the honor of emceeing the March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights in 1987), could just as easily have been best known as a jazz singer. Her rich, flexible voice adds depth and texture to an evening of fun created by and for the "perverts" of this country.

Familiar to Northwest audiences as an original member of the Portland Women's Theatre Company, Kelley is remembered here for covering lost lines or missing props with her quick, witty improvisations. Known across the country as the uptight, middle-class Gracie of *Dos Lesbos*, Kelley's tightly drawn and solidly packed characters are the perfect foils for those

loose, uninhibited, larger-than-life characters created by De Laria.

Richard Weinstock arranges, composes, and plays the music that drives the production through its fast-paced two hours. He has written music for Broadway, off Broadway, PBS, and for the I.T.P. Company in Los Angeles. He has worked extensively in Europe and South America. He adds a pleasant balance to this entertaining troupe.

The show promises to be topical in every city on the tour (in Portland we heard about Portlandia, the rain and several local celebrities).

Kelley's charismatic minister ("tra-la-lesbian") is not to be missed. Richard's selection of songs as delivered by Lea can make you believe they were written and produced just for her — even every jazz singer's standby, "Take the A-train."

Richard, Lea, Kelley — all are professionals, all are entertaining, all are committed to providing joy and confirmation for the lesbian and gay communities everywhere, while also giving pleasure and understanding to the heterosexuals in their audiences.

— Sandra de Helen