

THEATER REVIEW

For Crisis Out Loud

BY CARL-JOHN X VERAJA
Correspondent

The truth hurts and where there's other people's pain there's laughter.

"MidLife The Crisis Musical" is performed by a high-powered though relentlessly aging troupe at the Off Broadway Palm Theater until May 19. In it, we watch characters victimized by remaining alive long enough to develop character in the form of baldness, love handles, double chins and gender-resistant beards.

The Broadway Palm was popular with seniors the night I saw the play. Most of the theater-goers were already past this crisis but the memory was enough to encourage laughter.

The play was written by brothers Bob and Jim Walton, both of whom have a long history in acting and writing. Bob Walton is also a veteran of TV having appeared on Newhart, Picket Fences and Pros and Cons.

In the play you'll be taken from the shock of turning 40 to the wisdom of 60. It consists of many sketches which blend the scatological potency of "The Canterbury Tales" with the irreverence of "Saturday Night Live" all to a showtune swing. Most of the sketches feel complete though sometimes the endings leave you slightly cheated.

The singing mammogram is not to be missed. Deep yowls of agony never felt so good. In fact, the freak-outs come hard and fast throughout the show and, during one, I caught one of the actors cracking up despite himself. A newly menopausal wife had completely lost it over her apple/pear-shaped, cellulite-cratered torso. Per-



COURTESY PHOTO

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haps they had a bet going that she could yowl for over ten seconds at top volume? Good stuff.

And don't forget forgetfulness.

Despite my tendency to be a bitter snob, I found myself enjoying this show immensely. Obviously, we're not talking Shakespeare here. This is a play that's short on poetic overtures but with a marked tendency towards pushing our sensibilities to the limit without actually doing anything so drastic as unveiling a

naked female nipple. This is PG-13. PG-13 1/2 at worst.

If you're comfortable enough to laugh at displays of human nature that might include biological clock terrorism in the form of female-on-male sexual aggression, descriptions of bestiality, gay around the bend dads, drug use and close examination of all the tawdry veils of vanity then this play is definitely for you. But remember, if you bought a café ticket, this will be on a full stomach.

The play doesn't treat its subjects with complete levity, however. Mostly, yes, but not completely. There are sentimental moments and messages of hope. These don't make the play a masterpiece and I don't think they were intended to. This play is about letting you have fun at your own expense and getting away with

it despite yourself. The Walton brothers quite cleverly assuage any guilt you might have by horrifying you near the end of the play with one of the most difficult of responsibilities most of us will face and then offering some attitudinal solutions. Contrived, sure, but there's nothing wrong with a pat on the behind after you've stared down into the dark waters of the well of the middle-aged crisis.

You'll laugh and maybe cry a little. And though you may not care about most of the characters on a deep empathic level, there is the ring of truth in many of their presentations. Importantly, the variety of scenarios and fast pace prove winning and the intimacy of being no more than 25 feet from the stage enhances the intensity of the production.

And don't forget forgetfulness. ■

DETAILS

- **WHEN** - Shows are Tuesday through Friday at 8 pm. Saturday 1:15 and 8. Sunday 1:15 and 7
- **WHERE** - The Off Broadway Palm Theatre, 1400 Colonial Blvd.
- **ADMISSION** - from \$22-\$39
- **MORE INFO** -
Phone: (239) 278-4422
Order online:
www.BroadwayPalm.com
Seating: 90 seats

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