

BACKSTAGE

Talley's Folly

by Dink O'Neal

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The year is 1944, a time of cautious optimism as the tide of World War II turns in the Allies' favor. In a ramshackle boathouse on the Talley family's Missouri estate, a romantic relationship of sorts winds its way through a maze of mixed emotions. Matt Friedman, a Jewish accountant from St. Louis, courts the younger Sally Talley, whose affluent, small-town, Protestant family has made it abundantly clear that the union is unacceptable. This is playwright Lanford Wilson at his intellectual best.

Director Darin Anthony's guidance throughout this two-character play is evident yet never heavy-handed. Under his tutelage, the script ebbs and flows while we witness the complex tango of emotions these characters dance. Of course Anthony's job is made that much easier by the caliber of his cast. William Salyers has a perfect handle on Matt's dichotomous mindset. One minute he's exuding brazen self-confidence, the next he's an insecure schoolboy, hoping his intended will agree to attend the figurative prom. Salyers skillfully keys in on that sense of living for the moment, so prevalent at that point in history. Never knowing what tomorrow would bring, one couldn't allow bigotry and social condemnation to stand in the way of lifelong happiness.

As Sally, Amy Honey is Salyers' partner in this dance of reticent affection. Though the character is certainly intended by Wilson as a continual foil to Matt's circuitous plans for matrimony, Honey's initial choices surrounding Sally's called-for rigidity come off as unsympathetically mean. Fortunately, as the story progresses, she tempers this beautifully with glimpses into Sally's fear of living out the remainder of her life devoid of meaningful human contact.

Equally worthy of credit are the show's top-notch production values. The details of Jason Z. Cohen's intricate scenic design, augmented by Hope Shapiro's eye-catching collection of props, supply a surprisingly facile playground in which to stage the action. Dan Reed's lighting offers subtle support, and, except for a band playing inconsistently, Drew Dalzell's sound design provides appropriate mood enhancement.

Presented by Syzygy Theatre Company at GTC Burbank, 1111-B W. Olive Ave., Burbank. Fri.-Sat. 8 p.m., Sun. 3 p.m. Sep. 8-Oct. 14. (323) 254-9328.