



Entertainment

'Blonde' provides twists

Theater review

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Well how's this for tricky? I can't tell you much of anything without ruining the fun of Annalee Jefferies' solo performance in "[The Blonde, the Brunette and the Vengeful Redhead](#)" at Playhouse in the Park.

I can give you a tickle of an outline. In the beginning the largely bare stage shows single chairs, stools, a bedside table in individual pools of light. Screens line the back of the stage with blank video screens above.

We then hear a story that starts with a housewife on the verge of a nervous breakdown (she's the redhead) explaining what exactly she was doing at the mall that day.

Over the course of the play's two acts, a collection of characters each move the story forward in monologue. There are plot twists like mistaken identity and infidelity, and emotional markers like grief and serenity.

The story of the redhead at the mall actually plays out over the course of years, which interestingly illuminates the adage about the drop of water that falls in the pool causing ripples that fan out who knows how far?

"Blonde" is a gift of a script by Robert Hewett. As a piece of writing it's serviceable. What it does is provide a showcase for an actress of a certain age.

Each monologue moves the story forward, offering a different viewpoint and insight. Jefferies gets to play young, old, male, female – and blonde, brunette and redhead. It's a big acting job that invites big appreciation from an audience.

Actresses of that certain age should be sending Hewett buckets of flowers. With the help of director Mark Lamos, Jefferies gives us character portraits rather than sketches, so that in meeting the redhead, we know what we need to know about what her bad marriage must have been like; the trashy brunette next door informs not just her own story but the redhead's. And so on.

It's a marathon performance and Jefferies performs it like a champ.

One of the great pieces of fun is that between monologues Jefferies retreats behind the screens, which then light to show shelves of wigs and costume pieces. We get to see her quick transformations in silhouette – a near-magic trick.

Overhead, Peter Nigrini's video design comes to life, suggesting locations and connections between what has happened and what is to come, with key objects dangerously floating through. ***It's beautiful work, as is that of the rest of the design team: Andrew Jackness (set), Candice Donnelly (costumes), Thomas Hase (lights), David Stephen Baker (sound) and John Gromada (original music.)***

My only question is about the blonde – her monologue seems out of order, unless I'm missing something. The show moves forward in an orderly chronological fashion, but the blonde's appearance late in the proceedings seems to take us back to the early days.

"[The Blonde, the Brunette and the Vengeful Redhead](#)," through Feb. 15, Playhouse in the Park, 513-421-3888 and www.cincyplay.com.