



Arts: August 4, 2006

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## Arts Review

By Barry Pineo

### The Play About the Baby

**play! Theatre, through Aug. 5**

**Running Time: 1 hr, 50 min**

In a way, Edward Albee has always been about dreams. One of his earliest plays was titled *The American Dream*, and many of his plays, if not actually about the hopes, expectations, aspirations, or illusions of his characters, appear to be set in dreamlike worlds in which human lizards come out of the ocean or three women assume the personality of one.

Albee's *The Play About the Baby*, now being produced by the Coda Theater Project, falls into both categories. In it we watch a Boy and a Girl, played by Scott Geier and Maggie Wilhite, have a baby, although the Girl doesn't appear to be pregnant before she gives birth. We hear the baby but never see it, although we do see a large bundle in which the baby ostensibly is wrapped. The Boy and the Girl seem to be very happy together, their life with each other and with the baby seeming to be everything they have ever wanted.

Enter the Man and the Woman, played by Zac Crofford and Lisa Scheps. We are introduced first to the Man: a youngish, heavily bearded one, dressed somewhat formally in suspenders, although wearing nothing on his feet. (No one wears anything on his or her feet in this particular world.) The Man is the voice of authority and questions everyone's perceptions about reality, including his own. The Man introduces the Woman, a flamboyant, theatrical one who claims to be well-traveled. The Boy and the Girl and the Man and the Woman appear to coexist in the same space and occasionally appear actually to know one another, though, for a time, they mostly just glimpse the others as they execute their various entrances and exits. Eventually they all meet, and what the Boy and the Girl – and we – discover is that the likable Man and the enchanting Woman have come for a dread and dire purpose. They have come to – well, I don't want to give that one away.

Unfortunately, in my description, I don't think I'm doing either the play or the production justice. While it probably goes without saying, Albee is a brilliant writer, providing entertaining dialogue filled with striking imagery and wit and characters that are fully fleshed human beings. And while director Kate Meehan doesn't get performances of great depth from her actors, each does hit a level that is quite watchable, with Geier all horniness and sexual energy, Wilhite all wide-eyed innocence, Crofford the voice of ultimate control, and Scheps – giving the most successful performance – charming eccentricity itself. Most importantly and significantly, the actors deliver the play cleanly and clearly. Some questionable, nontraditional casting and what are mostly unnecessary, ill-advised sound choices aside, there's a lot to be said for a production in which you not only can hear every word but almost never lose the thread of what's being communicated.

And what, precisely, is being communicated? Good question, that. Something like this: that in the beginning, all is innocence, love, and dreams; that eventually the truth of the world rears its ugly, cultural head; and that, in the end, you will be left to discover that you knew nothing.

Nothing at all.

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